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MONDAY, JANUARY 10, 2005

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JOSEPH GORDON/Stars and Stripes

Sgt. Andrew Vasey, left, and Sgt. Anthony Czerwinski of the 4th Platoon, Small Craft Company say they are eager to return to their mission patrolling along the Euphrates River in Iraq. The Marine company out of Camp Lejeune, N.C., has been temporarily beached since an ambush Jan. 1 killed a 19-year-old coxswain. Several others were severely injured in the attack.



Jets' Chad Pennington

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wild upsets
in first round
of NFL playoffs**

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World

Japan-N. Korea relations: Japan remains cautious about imposing economic sanctions on impoverished North Korea for its kidnapping of Japanese nationals decades ago and might ask the United Nations to help resolve the dispute, a senior ruling party official said Sunday.

North Korea says that eight of the 13 Japanese citizens it has admitted to kidnapping in the 1970s and '80s are dead. Japan, which says Pyongyang hasn't offered concrete evidence of their deaths, has demanded an investigation.

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi is under pressure from the Japanese public to consider sanctions against the isolated communist regime, but Tokyo worries that it could prevent a breakthrough in six-nation talks aimed at ending the North's nuclear weapons program.

"We have to take a cautious approach," Tsutomu Tukebe, the secretary-general of Koizumi's Liberal Democratic Party, said during a talk show aired by public broadcaster NHK.

Pinocchio investigation: An investigative judge has found that former dictator Gen. Augusto Pinochet accumulated a fortune of \$15.9 million in foreign bank accounts and used Chilean army funds for personal benefit, a newspaper reported Sunday.

The Santiago daily *El Mercurio* said the information comes from a report prepared by judge Sergio Munoz, who has been investigating Pinochet for five months after a U.S. Senate committee disclosed he had secreted assets for up to \$8 million at Riggs Bank in Washington.

The newspaper did not disclose how it got the report, but published several photographs of what it said is the original document.

There was no comment from the judge, who normally conducts his investigations with extreme confidentiality.

Italy train collision: Crews finished clearing wreckage from train tracks Sunday, two days after a freight train collided with a passenger train, killing 17 people.

Private TGS TV showed crews working to lay new track on the line between Bologna and Verona, where the two trains smashed head-on into each other on Friday in thick, midday fog near Bologna di Crevalcore, north of Bologna.

On Saturday, firefighters and other rescue workers removed the rest of the mangled bodies found in a nearly crushed train car, raising the final death toll in the accident to 17. A few people remained hospitalized with injuries.

Iran nuclear crisis: Iran will allow U.N. nuclear experts to take environmental samples at a military site the United States links to an alleged nuclear weapons program, but won't allow them to inspect military equipment, the Foreign Ministry spokesman said Sunday.

The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, had said last week Iran had agreed to grant access to the site at Parchin, just southeast of Tehran, and that his inspectors could arrive soon. The IAEA has been pressing Tehran for months to be allowed to inspect the military complex, long used by Iranians to research, develop and produce ammunition, missiles and high explosives.

"The discussion is not about visiting military installations," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told reporters Sunday.

"The IAEA had asked to take environmental samples from the complex's green spaces," Asefi said, apparently referring to landscaped areas outside the huge complex's ammunition production workshops.



Civil rights pioneer: A congressional honor guard carries the flag-draped casket of former Rep. Shirley Chisholm after a memorial service at the First A.M.E. Church of Palm Coast, Fla. She was remembered on Saturday not only for being the first black woman to run for president but for never backing down from her convictions. She was an outspoken champion of women, minorities and the poor during seven terms in the U.S. House of Representatives. Hundreds of mourners, including more than a half dozen members of the Congressional Black Caucus, which Chisholm helped establish, came to the service to honor her.

Roh offers apology: President Roh Moo-hyun apologized Sunday for the appointment of an education chief who stepped down after three days amid accusations of using funds improperly.

Roh's office has been accused of failing to review Lee Ki-jun's record thoroughly before his appointment as deputy prime minister in charge of education.

Civic groups have accused Lee, a former president of Seoul National University, of spending school funds improperly and hiding real estate assets under his son's name. He stepped down Friday after serving in the post for three days.

"I apologize to the people that a controversy was brought about concerning the appointment of a deputy prime minister in charge of education," Roh said, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency.

Jewish Congress meets: Some 500 delegates were to attend the World Jewish Congress' first international meeting in four years on Monday to discuss anti-Semitism in Europe and relations with the Muslim world.

The two-day session of the WJC, will confront what the group calls the "disturbing increase" in anti-Semitism in Europe and elsewhere.

"Combating anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism in Europe is a critical part of our agenda," Edgar M. Bronfman, president of the WJC said ahead of the meeting. "We will continue to fight in every country for tougher legislation and enforcement, stronger security and more education."

Bronfman and other representatives are to meet with European Union officials, including European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso after the session to discuss the 25-nation bloc can improve ways to combat racism and anti-Semitism.

Bosnian Muslims seek compensation: Montenegrin authorities face millions of dollars in compensation demands from families of Bosnian Muslims who were deported from Montenegro during the war and subsequently killed by Bosnian Serbs, a lawyer said Sunday.

Dragan Prelevic, a Montenegrin lawyer representing victims' families, told the Associated Press that so far five families have sued the authorities, demanding compensation, and many more are planning to do so. The cases are still being reviewed by the Montenegrin courts.

War on terrorism

Collecting Afghan weapons: Officials began removing tanks and rocket-launchers from the mountain stronghold of a famed anti-Taliban commander on Sunday, the final leg of a drive to collect all the heavy weapons in Afghanistan and help draw a line under its violent past.

Under the watch of U.N. monitors, officials began rounding up 110 tanks, rocket-launchers, missiles and artillery pieces from the Panjshir Valley, the redoubt of famed commander Ahmad Shah Massoud, who defended it against Soviet occupiers and the Taliban and was a key player in the country's ruinous civil wars before his assassination three years ago.

Officials said it would take two weeks to bring the weapons out of the valley, completing a nationwide program to round up heavy armaments and make a renewed outbreak of large-scale hostilities impossible.

Afghan judge arrested: A judge arrested in connection with two bombings that killed about 12 people, including four Americans, in the Afghan capital last year has admitted that the suspected organizers of the attacks lodged at his house, a senior official said Sunday.

Nasrullah, a 60-year-old preliminary court judge, was detained about two weeks ago after two captured suspects said they had stayed in his Kabul residence while they orchestrated an Aug. 29 car bombing at a U.S. security company as well as a suicide attack in the city.

Officials have identified the alleged ring-leader as a Tajik national named Mohammed Haider and say he took his orders from an Iraqi al-Qaida member. They accuse Haider and an Afghan accomplice of organizing the attacks.

States

Spitzer for N.Y. governor: Looking to impress the news media and possibly scare off potential opponents for the 2006 governor's race, state Attorney General Eliot Spitzer is pleading for a quick infusion of political donations in advance of required financial filings due soon.

Democrat Spitzer, who gained international attention with investigations of Wall Street brokers, mutual fund executives and the insurance industry, announced in early December that he would run for governor.

Stories and photo from The Associated Press

Military regrets loss of 'possibly innocent lives'

Strike on wrong house south of Mosul killed at least 5 Iraqis, statement says

By BASSEM BROUÉ
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — The U.S. military acknowledged five people were killed when it bombed the wrong house during a search operation in northern Iraq. And American troops opened fire after their convoy was struck by a roadside bomb at a checkpoint south of Baghdad, killing at least two policemen and three civilians, police said Sunday.

South of Mosul, the owner of the house that was struck, Ali Yousef, said 14 people were killed when the 500-pound GPS-guided bomb hit at about 2 a.m. Saturday in the town of Aitha, 30 miles south of Mosul.

The U.S. military later released a statement saying it regretted the loss of "possibly innocent lives" in the strike, which occurred as U.S. ground troops searched for "an anti-Iraqi force cell leader."

South of Baghdad, U.S. officials said they had no information about the shooting at the checkpoint, which occurred overnight Saturday. Interior Ministry spokesman Col. Adnan Abdul-Rahman said a U.S. military was hit by a roadside bomb near a police checkpoint in Yussifiyah, nine miles south of Baghdad, and

troops opened fire, killing two police and three civilians.

Dr. Ammar Abdul-Hadi of the al-Yarmouk hospital said eight people were killed in the attack and 12 were wounded.

On Sunday, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell was asked on ABC's "This Week" how he would define success in Iraq's election, and acknowledged concern about what will happen after the vote.

The attacks came at an extremely delicate time, with Iraq ruled by violence just three weeks before elections for a national assembly. The United States has insisted that the vote go ahead on Jan. 30.

"Success is putting in place a government that is really elected and represents all of the people of Iraq... and creating an Iraqi security force that is able to protect the country and protect the people of Iraq," he said in the interview.

Meanwhile, Iraq's most influential Sunni group will abandon its call for a boycott of Jan. 30 elections if the United States gives a timetable for withdrawing multinational forces, a spokesman for the group said Sunday.

Members of the powerful Association of Muslim Scholars relayed their request to a senior U.S. embassy official at a meeting Saturday, the Sunni official said on condition of anonymity.



An Iraqi volunteer in Baghdad prepares candidates' posters and fliers for distribution in provinces on Sunday.

The meeting was confirmed Saturday by U.S. Embassy spokesman Bob Callahan, who said an unnamed senior embassy official in Iraq met with leading association members in an effort to persuade them to participate in the landmark election for a constitutional assembly.

In an apparent accident, seven Ukrainians and one Kazakh serving with the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq were killed Sunday in an explosion while loading bombs that could be used by warplanes, officials said.

LT. Col. Artur Domanski, a Polish military spokesman in Iraq,

said the explosion occurred at about noon at an ammunition dump about 6 miles south of Suwayra. He said 11 soldiers were wounded — four Kazakhs and seven Ukrainians.

Few details about the deaths of the Ukrainians and Kazakhs were known. Domanski said an investigation had been launched and the cause wasn't clear. Ukraine's Defense Ministry said soldiers were loading aviation bombs when one of the devices exploded.

Also Sunday, a U.S. soldier assigned to the Task Force Baghdad was killed in a roadside bomb explosion, the military said, although it did not say where the attack occurred.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Saturday, at least 1,351 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,056 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said. The figures include three military civilians.

The AP count is nine higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. Friday.

The British military has reported 76 deaths; Italy, 19; Poland, 16; Spain, 11; Ukraine, nine; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, 1; Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary and Latvia one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,213 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 947 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ A U.S. soldier was killed Friday in a nonhostile vehicle accident in Anbar province.

The latest identifications reported by the Defense Department:

■ Army Pfc. Kenneth G. Vonrout, 20, Bloomingburg, N.Y., died Thursday in Baghdad when an explosive struck his vehicle, assigned to the National Guard's Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment, 42nd Infantry Division, New York.

JRTC general seeks advice from bases in Afghanistan

By KEVIN DOUGHERTY
Stars and Stripes

TARIN KOWT, Afghanistan — In time and distance, landscape and resistance, Louisiana is worlds away from the birthplace of the Taliban.

"We live in the wild, wild west," Army Maj. Erik Sevigny said to Brig. Gen. Michael Barbero in summing up daily life at the forward operating base at Tarin Kowt in southeastern Afghanistan.

Normally, Barbero labors in at Fort Polk in Louisiana. But for the past week, the head of the U.S. Army's Joint Readiness Training Center has been touring Afghanistan, essentially to update the Army's playbook.

Armed with new tactics and lessons learned, Barbero and his instructors plan to adjust the training regimen units go through in preparation for deployment to Afghanistan.

"It only makes sense," said Lt. Col. Todd Miller, the operations officer for Combined Task Force Bruno, which is headquartered in Kandahar. "You try to replicate the environment as best as possible."

That's somewhat easier said than done, given that Louisiana and Afghanistan have about as much in common as the revelers

on Bourbon Street do with the Taliban and its spiritual leader, Mullah Omar. But soldiers are an adaptable lot and efforts such as Barbero's go a long way toward better preparing them for deployment.

Whatever adjustments the JRTC makes based on this tour will be incorporated into the next training session for Afghanistan, Barbero said.

The frontline commanders Barbero visited by helicopter were all deadly serious as one after another sat down with him to offer their perspectives. Stars and Stripes was invited along, providing that no sensitive material, such as intelligence-gathering procedures and future operations, be released.

At main forward operating bases, like Ripley near Tarin Kowt, the setting was comfortable and coffee was served. At remote locations, such as a place named Sweeney near the Pakistani border, conditions were more austere.

One of the men Barbero spoke with was Capt. Mike Berdy, a company commander with 2nd Battalion, 35th Regiment, 25th Infantry Division. Berdy's base camp, which is shared with a team of U.S. Special Forces, is in the Shinkay Mountains at an altitude of 6,658 feet. In the air is cold, the ground is frozen and snow blankets the ground.

"These guys are smart," Berdy said of the enemy. Taliban and foreign fighters "don't travel with their weapons. They use cache systems," he added.

In case after case, he said, the enemy, even if vastly outnumbered, "won't hesitate to engage us."

"What will turn it green?" Barbero asked, referring to a level of safety.

"Obviously, the [Afghan National Army]," Berdy answered. "There's got to be a plan for them."

And there is, according to Col. Richard Pedersen, the U.S. Army regional commander in southern Afghanistan. Pedersen, who accompanied Barbero on his rounds Saturday and Sunday, said more ANA soldiers would be joining U.S. forces in the coming months. He told Berdy that if he could find room for some of them on the compound, they would go there.

Berdy and other commanders like him, such as Capt. Josh Bookout of the 25th Infantry Division's 2nd Battalion, 5th Regiment, which patrols an area that includes Mullah Omar's birthplace near the village of Deh Rawod, believe they are gradually winning over many of the local Taliban.

"They are starting to trust us and to work with us," Pedersen said.

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KEVIN DOUGHERTY/Stars and Stripes

Capt. Josh Bookout, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Regiment, 25th Infantry Division of Hawaii, speaks with Brig. Gen. Michael Barbero, left, head of the U.S. Army's Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La., on Saturday at Forward Operating Base Cobra in Afghanistan.

GIs try to make filling up easier for Iraqis

BY JASON CHUDY

Stars and Stripes

BAGHDAD — The price of gasoline in this oil-rich nation's capital isn't only measured in dinars. It is also measured in hours.

Thrown in a little corruption, inefficiency and insufficient infrastructure, and that price per liter skyrockets for the average Iraqi.

At the gas station on southern Baghdad's al Daura road, for example, a tank of gas that costs the equivalent of a handful of dollars involves lines that can produce waits of more than 20 hours.

And it's not just the Iraqis who are involved in this day-to-day struggle. Nearly every daylight patrol of Company B of the 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment from Fort Hood, Texas, involves the soldiers inserting themselves in the fight with black marketers, gas station operators, security and even Iraqi police.

"I'd say 20 percent of their time — a little less than an hour out of every patrol," company commander Capt. Dave Maxwell said when asked how much his soldiers spend dealing with fuel problems.

Maxwell said, use petroleum products for many things: kerosene for heating; propane for heating and cooking; and gasoline for automobiles and electricity generators.

"It's important to them, basically every aspect of their lives," he said. "This can really put a guy in a bad mood if he doesn't have the things he needs to take care of his family."

Many of the problems don't come from a lack of gasoline, but rather from a range of problems including a limited number of gas stations.

"For an area that has this many people in it, it has only one gas station," said Maxwell. "[In the United States] an area this size would have 20 gas stations. They don't have the infrastructure to distribute gas fast enough."

For a few hours Wednesday, gasoline distribution took a turn for the better at the al Daura station.

Dozens of cars were lined up outside, waiting for gas, as they do nearly every day. Others trying to beg or bribe their way in line caused traffic jams along a main road through the area. And black marketers just to the east caused even more traffic.

So Company B soldiers were given the order to straighten things out.

The black marketers were chased away and their gasoline containers given to passing vehicles. Then the soldiers moved onto the station itself, closing it



PHOTOS BY JASON CHUDY/Stars and Stripes

Sgt. Korynne Clemons, a medic with Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, pumps gas for an Iraqi man at the al Daura gas station in southern Baghdad. Soldiers from the company took control of the gas station and pumped free gas for a few hours before returning the station to civilian control.



Iraqi children help a man push his car up to the gas pump at the al Daura gas station in southern Baghdad.

down for a few minutes to clear all the traffic, then letting in a handful of cars every few minutes. The soldiers themselves started pumping gas — at no cost — to smiling, grateful drivers.

Some car owners had to push their vehicles up to the pump, but the logjam was eventually lessened, and for a few hours this Baghdad neighborhood had an efficiently run gas station.

The soldiers, well aware that station workers often overcharge motorists or charge them a fee just to get in line, felt no guilt over giving away the gas.

When the soldiers returned the next morning to survey the station for future improvements, dozens of cars waited in line, black marketers sold their fuel again and the line jammed up.

Business, it seemed, was back to normal.

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Curbing black market gas

Some Iraqis are cashing in on the city's limited number of gas stations.

Black marketers are seen on many streets and highways in the city, with their trademark length of hose with a cut-off plastic bottle top for a funnel and large plastic containers full of gasoline.

They can charge whatever they want for the gasoline, but usually sell it around double the average rate. Though prices vary, it's still much less than the U.S. average of \$1.80 per gallon.

"I see it as capitalism," said Capt. Dave Maxwell, commander of Company B, 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment. "They're trying to feed their families."

But many of these energy entrepreneurs run afoul of the mili-

tary because they cause traffic jams that restrict military and civilian traffic.

Insurgents will also set up black market stations along the main routes to gather information on military traffic or to set up roadside bombs.

"The problem with them in high traffic areas is that they're used by insurgents who are watching patrols or are setting [improvised explosive devices]," Maxwell said. "They'll set up, place IEDs, then move 400 meters down the road."

So when patrols come across the gas vendors along the main routes, they are chased from the location and many times the gasoline will be given — free of charge — to passing motorists, temporarily alleviating the problem.

— Jason Chudy

GI gets 6 months for ordering Iraqis thrown into Tigris River

BY ANGELA K. BROWN

The Associated Press

FORT HOOD, Texas — An Army platoon sergeant who ordered his soldiers to throw Iraqis into the Tigris River was sentenced Saturday to six months in military prison, but will not be discharged.

Army Sgt. 1st Class Fraday Perkins was convicted Friday of two counts of aggravated assault, assault consummated by battery and obstruction of justice. He was acquitted of involuntary manslaughter and making a false statement.

He did not testify during his trial, but before he was sentenced Saturday told the jury of Army of-

ficers and enlisted members that his actions were wrong — although he did not apologize to the Iraqis. He said he still loved the military and did not want to lose his job.

"If I had to go back, I would definitely do something different on those days," Perkins said, wiping away tears.

Perkins, 33, and another soldier were accused of ordering soldiers to push two Iraqis into the river in Samarra in January 2004. Prosecutors say Zaidoun Hassan, 19, drowned and his cousin, Marwan Hassan, climbed out the river.

Defense attorneys contended Zaidoun may still be alive, but say if he is dead it was not at the

hands of U.S. soldiers.

The six-man military jury — which decided against the manslaughter conviction — also reduced Perkins' rank by one grade to staff sergeant, which cuts his pay and responsibilities.

Jurors considered a sentencing range of no punishment to a dishonorable discharge, rank reduction and 1½ years in prison.

Prosecutors had recommended

five years in prison and a dishonorable or bad-conduct discharge.

Perkins was taken to the Bell County Jail because Ford Hood has no jail. It could take up to a week to determine where he will serve his sentence.

Prosecutors and defense attorneys declined to comment after the sentencing.

Perkins did not discuss specifics of the incident on the stand Saturday, but admitted he had ordered his soldiers to throw an Iraqi man into the river in December 2003.

Perkins said the man had made a gesture of slitting his throat.

He said he never meant to injure or kill the Iraqi by throwing

him in the river; and he ordered him thrown in the river to teach him a "hard lesson" about threatening U.S. troops. He testified he saw the man climb out alive.

"Basically the enemy would test your resolve... I didn't want them to think we were soft or weak," said Perkins, who has 14 years of military service.

Perkins was convicted of assault consummated by battery in Zaidoun's purported death, which carries a maximum sentence of six months. He was convicted of aggravated assault in connection with the attack on Marwan Hassan and for ordering the other man thrown into the river in December 2003. He was found innocent of making a false statement.



Perkins

Unless hot spots flare, focus to stay on Iraq

DOD to keep eye on North Korea, Iran and other troubled areas

BY PAULINE JELINEK
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The military will have plenty to do in the four years of a second Bush administration. While the war in Iraq figures to dominate all else, as it has the past two years, other potential hot spots could demand attention.

And overshadowing all will be the questions of whether the military has enough troops — and money — to do everything the administration has planned.

"Conventional wisdom says that most of our assets are going to be involved in Iraq," said Peter Brookes, an assistant defense secretary for Asia at the start of President Bush's first term.

"But you're just not sure what sort of things are going to develop ... flare up," the Heritage Foundation analyst said, wondering about the possibility of issues arising with China, Taiwan and North Korea.

Consider the tsunami in Asia. The Pentagon is devoting more than 13,000 troops, an aircraft carrier and dozens of aircraft to humanitarian relief.

As for new combat operations, the seeds of possible military conflict have been germinating for some time in Iran, Syria, Pakistan and elsewhere, analysts said.

Right now, some 150,000 American troops are trying to stabilize an increasingly violent Iraq, with no time table for when they can leave.

"At the Pentagon, policy-makers are utterly absorbed with Iraq," said analyst Loren Thompson of the Lexington Institute.

The military also must anticipate and plan for increased China-Taiwan tensions; troubled diplomatic efforts to halt suspected Iranian and North Korean nuclear programs; and the struggles by Pakistan's president, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, to hold his nation together while he allies himself with U.S. counterterrorism efforts in the face of violent disapproval from domestic Islamic fundamentalists.

Massive tasks that can't be finished but on which defense officials need to make headway in the next few years include the transformation of the military and its weapons systems toward a more modern force, the moving and closing of some overseas bases, and another round of closings of domestic military bases.

"What happens is that they have all these things on their mind ... things being nudged along like a peanut with your nose, and then there's a fire you have to put out," Brookes said.

Defense officials are trying to



AP photos

U.S. Marines walk during a patrol late last month in Ramadi, Iraq. With about 150,000 servicemembers currently in Iraq, some wonder if the U.S. military has enough troops to do everything the Bush administration has planned.

What's in store

FRONT AND CENTER: The U.S. military likely will remain sharply focused on Iraq during the second Bush administration, but other troubled regions could demand attention.

HOT SPOTS: Tensions continue to simmer between the United States and Iran, Syria and North Korea. Relations between China and Taiwan also bear watching.

CHANGING MILITARY: Plans to reshape the military, from troop strength to closing bases and realigning troop deployment, may have to take a back seat.

— The Associated Press

figure out how to offset the unexpectedly high cost of the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Among cost-saving ideas being discussed are retiring one of the Navy's 12 aircraft carriers and reducing the Air Force's purchase of F-22 stealth fighters, officials say.

But it could cost an additional \$3 billion a year to expand the \$12,000-strong Army by 30,000 soldiers, something a senior Army official last week said they may have to do. The Army has the authority to add the soldiers but arranged for it to be only a temporary boost because it did not want a long-term commitment to the cost of a larger force.

The fact that the military is severely stretched restrains those who might be tempted to use force in new places, Thompson said.

"Inner counsels at the White House — people like Vice President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld — would very much like to do some-



A U.S. soldier uses a pair of binoculars to check the north side as a North Korean soldier, center, stands guard at the truce village of Panmunjom at the DMZ between the two Koreas on Feb. 5. North Korea is one of the hot spots that Bush is expected to continue to watch closely during the next four years.

thing about troublemakers like Iran and Syria, but in order to act on that impulse they would need a much larger" force, he said.

"We are not going to be looking for any wars of choice, that's for sure," The Brookings Institution's Michael O'Hanlon said.

"But if some of these things happen," he said of any flare-up surrounding Korea, Pakistan, Iran or Taiwan, "we won't have a choice."

Without new provocations, analysts see little chance the administration would use force against North Korea. In Iran, by contrast, some think it somewhat more possible that there could be U.S. or Israeli action.

On the issue of realigning U.S. forces around the world, Bush says he plans to move back to the states up to 70,000 uniformed personnel and 100,000 dependents, part of a worldwide plan to break down large Cold War-era bases and move smaller numbers of troops to places where they can more quickly respond to flare-ups.

That effort can either be complicated or hastened by the continued deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, analysts said.

"Any time you have a plan, you have to overlay with reality," said Brookes, noting that the two campaigns could require much of the military to stay in the Middle

East region. "Right now you may need the bases in Germany that you had hoped to close ... this may have to be put off."

"Alas, the current administration's rebasing plan, like the rest of its defense program, has partly become captive to the hope that the missions in Afghanistan and Iraq are temporary," American Enterprise Institute analyst Thomas Donnelly wrote in a recent paper.

O'Hanlon disagreed, saying a plan to decrease troops in South Korea over the longrun, for instance, might be made easier by Iraq's needs. Troops sent from Korea this year to help temporarily in Iraq may never be built back up in Korea, he said.

Beached Marines ready to return to water

Small Craft Company patrolled Euphrates until its coxswain was killed in an enemy ambush

By JOSEPH GORDONO

Stars and Stripes

HADITHAH DAM, Iraq — After months of patrols and countless firefights in Iraq, the only Small Craft Company in the Marine Corps has been temporarily beached after suffering its first combat death.

But the Marines who man the boats say they are eager to get back onto the water and continue their mission, which has taken them from hot spot to hot spot along the Euphrates River in Anbar province.

"Once we started proving ourselves as an asset, it just hasn't stopped," said Sgt. Andrew Vasey, a 29-year-old 4th Platoon Marine from Olsburg, Kan.

"We've been used as a recon tool, to conduct security patrols up and down the river, a transport for personnel, to go on raids and draw contact... we've been a medevac, too."

Small Craft Company, normally based at Camp Lejeune, N.C., is currently operating with the 1st Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment at Hadithah Dam, northwest of Fallujah. The unit has seen action in Fallujah, Ramadi, Habbaniyah and numerous other locations since arriving in Iraq.

And it has been the first to test the Small Unit Riverine Craft, or SURC, which replaced previous vessels used by Marine small craft units. The 39-foot boat, armed with a Gatling gun and several other heavy weapons, carries a crew of five, along with up to 15 ground troops.

With its speed and maneuver-

ability, the boat can overtake anything on the waters, Marines say. And with its relatively flat bottom, it can beach itself on shore and deliver ground troops at sites Humvees or other vehicles can't reach as quickly.

In November's assault on Fallujah, the unit patrolled the Euphrates River on the west side of the city. During the aborted assault on Fallujah last April, several high-ranking insurgents were believed to have escaped the city via the river. Small Craft Company's role this time was to cut off that exit.

The unit has also worked with combat engineers, Army infantry units and Iraqi special forces. It has recovered weapons caches and intercepted smugglers heading downriver from the Syrian border. At one point, it found three large weapons caches within 1,500 meters of one another along the riverbanks.

Despite its success, the Iraq mission will likely be the last operation deployment for Small Craft Company. Corps officials plan to disband the unit, as early as this summer.

Members of 4th Platoon say they will be disappointed if that happens. Part of that frustration is because the unit believes it has proven its versatility and durability in Iraq. The first elements of Small Craft Company arrived in March; they were relieved by other platoons in September.

"We've been in more gunfights than we care to talk about. Everywhere we've been, we've had at least two or three serious engagements," Vasey said Friday as he



JOSEPH GORDONO/Stars and Stripes

Sgt. Anthony Czerwinski, seated, and Sgt. Andrew Vasey, of 4th Platoon, Small Craft Company, watch the river from the deck of their boat near the Hadithah Dam, northwest of Fallujah, Iraq.

perched on a SURC tied up near the Hadithah Dam.

Sgt. Anthony Czerwinski, who was wearing a black watch cap Friday emblazoned with "Amphibious Raid Instructor" in gold lettering, served three years as a small-boat tactics instructor at the Special Operations Training Group. He believes the performance of the SURC crews far exceeded what the doctrine had anticipated.

"No training can take the place of doing it for real. You couldn't ask for a better group of guys, but you couldn't prepare them for what they'd see here," said the 29-year-old Painesville, Ohio, native. "They've shined since we got here, and I credit a lot of that to the leadership of the platoon."

And the boats have been better than advertised.

"They've saved our asses more than once," Czerwinski said, of the Gatling guns and the boats'

other weaponry.

Over the course of its deployment, 4th Platoon has watched their enemy's tactics evolve.

"At first, it was small arms fire from the shore and then they'd run," Vasey said. "Then they upgraded the ambushes, and they've thrown in mortars, (rocket-propelled grenades), medium machine guns. Pretty much anything."

The Jan. 1 ambush that grounded the boats was well planned, 4th Platoon Marine said. It began when a routine patrol was fired upon from an area of shoreline just outside Hadithah city. The crews fired back, then returned to base to pick up more Marines.

"This time they stayed and waited for the ground element. They stayed and waited for us to come back," Vasey said. When the ground teams landed, an explosion — nobody is sure whether it

was an improvised bomb or a mortar — hit them almost immediately. That was followed by small arms and machine gun fire.

One Marine, a 19-year-old coxswain, was killed. Several others were severely injured, including an engineer who lost part of his right arm.

Vasey and Czerwinski estimate that the first ambush was carried out by fewer than five attackers. When the Marines returned, some 15-20 insurgents laid in wait. The firefight lasted around 20 minutes, they said.

The Marines of 4th Platoon admit the incident has taken its toll, but say they want to get back on the river. Even then, though, they expect more.

"It's started getting silly," Czerwinski said. "It's a surprise every time we get hit. It's never the same scenario twice."

E-mail Joseph Gordon at gordonj@stripes.osd.mil

Continuing war in Iraq is taking its toll on Army

By ROBERT BURNS

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The strain of fighting a counter-insurgency war in Iraq, on a scale not foreseen even a year ago and with no end in sight, is taking a startling toll on the American military.

The U.S. death count is rising — at least 1,350 in all, rising by 70 or more each month.

Costs are escalating — more than \$1 billion a week, with the total now exceeding \$100 billion.

And while Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, a chief architect of the war, remains focused on his exit strategy — training Iraqis to provide their own defense, enabling U.S. troops to begin leaving — even he has recently used the term "bleak" to describe the situation.

Rumsfeld says he remains convinced that the only way out is to exercise patience and fortitude while a reliable Iraqi

security force is developed. And U.S. military commanders in Iraq make almost daily pronouncements of optimism that the tide is beginning to turn against the insurgents.

Analysis

Indeed, the Iraqi security forces are growing, in numbers at least, and U.S. forces continue to kill and capture insurgents, uncover and destroy arms caches and support the country's rebuilding. The administration hopes the Jan. 30 elections will mark a turning point for the better.

Yet, the Pentagon is so strapped to sustain a force of 150,000 troops in Iraq that some senior Army leaders are worried that the war — combined with the conflict in Afghanistan — is wearing out their soldiers.

The question is being raised: How does the military retain an all-volunteer force at the current level of U.S. commitment overseas? One way, a senior Army official suggested, would be to spend an additional \$3

billion a year to expand the Army by 30,000 soldiers.

Another way would be to loosen restrictions on the use of the National Guard and Reserve, so they could be called to active duty for more than 24 total months of service, which is now the limit.

In putting together a force to rotate into Iraq starting this summer — the fourth rotation since the war began — the Army found itself with a smaller proportion of Guard and Reserve available because there just weren't enough left.

"We've tapped 'em out," the Army official said Thursday, speaking only on condition of anonymity because the service is figuring it will have to maintain that level for another four or five years.

The Army has about 135,000 soldiers in Iraq and Kuwait, and the official said that for planning purposes the service is figuring it will have to maintain that level for another four or five years.

That's an astounding level of commit-

ment, considering that the Army has many other obligations, including deterring war on the Korean peninsula and keeping peace in the Balkans.

And there is the "other" war — the one in Afghanistan, now in its fourth year.

When President Bush made the decision to invade Iraq and topple Saddam Hussein's government in March 2003, battlefield success came so quickly that military planners foresaw withdrawing 50,000 U.S. troops within weeks, with even more coming home in the fall of 2003. Instead, the size of the U.S. force there has actually grown and now stands at the highest level of the entire war.

A U.S. military spokesman, Brig. Gen. Erv Lessel, said Friday the worst may yet have to come. "I think a worst case is where they have a series of horrific attacks that cause mass casualties in some spectacular fashion in the days leading up to the elections," Lessel said. "A year ago you didn't see these kinds of horrific things."

After 3 years, Gitmo jails look permanent

BY PAISLEY DODDS

The Associated Press

GUANTANAMO BAY NAVAL BASE, Cuba — The U.S. prison camp for terror suspects is taking on a look of permanence as the mission marks its third year Tuesday, with plans for a \$25 million prison, \$1.7 million psychiatric wing and permanent guard force.

Most of the 550 prisoners from 42 countries aren't considered to be of significant intelligence value any longer, but many swept up during the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan aren't expected to be going home anytime soon either — some because of stalled legal proceedings, others because they still pose an alleged threat to the United States or its allies.

"Where this will go four or five years down the road, I don't know," said Army Brig. Gen. Jay Hood, who has been in command of the Guantanamo Bay mission for about nine months.

The uncertainties of the mission coupled

with multiplying allegations of abuse and mistreatment at the hands of U.S. forces are problematic to lawyers and human rights groups who have long argued that the Guantanamo Bay prison camp is an affront to American values.

"Guantanamo has become an icon of lawlessness," said the London-based Amnesty International. "In its more than 1,000 days of executive detentions, it has become a symbol of a government's attempt to put itself above the law."

Only four men have been charged since the mission began and most of the prisoners have been held without being charged or having access to attorneys.

Ten cases of abuse or mistreatment have also strained the mission, and documents published recently show that FBI agents warned the U.S. government about such incidents in 2002, more than a year before the scandal at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison. One letter, written by a senior Justice Department official and obtained by The Associated Press, suggested the Pentagon failed to act on the FBI complaints.

Although all the prisoners are accused of links to Afghanistan's ousted Taliban regime or the al-Qaida terrorist network, Osama bin Laden has remained at large since the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks that killed nearly 3,000 in the United States.

Some of those being held in Guantanamo include an al-Qaida financier who was in Orlando, Florida, the same day as Sept. 11 hijacker Mohammed Atta; another who allegedly designed a prototype shoe bomb; and a third who plotted to attack oil tankers in the Persian Gulf using explosive-laden fishing boats, according to Pentagon spokeswoman Barbara Burfield.

But "the majority of the individuals that are here today ... are not of intelligence value — right now," said Steve Rodriguez, a civilian in charge of interrogations.

The government's intention was to try the four charged suspects before military commissions. But U.S. District Judge James Robertson ruled in November that bin Laden driver Salim Ahmed Hamdan,

34, couldn't be tried before a military commission unless a competent tribunal decided he was not entitled to the protections given to prisoners of war under the Geneva Conventions.

Robertson also ruled Hamdan — who was bin Laden's driver from 1996 to 2001 and is charged with transporting weapons to al-Qaida operatives — cannot be tried before a military tribunal unless the procedures conform to due process protections under the U.S. Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Although the decision mentioned Hamdan, it effectively stalled all trials.

Also planned are a \$1.7 million psychiatric wing to treat prisoners with mental illnesses — there have been 34 reported suicide attempts since the prison opened — and a \$4 million security fence that could reduce the need for some 300 infantry troops.

A full-time, 324-member Military Police Interment and Resettlement Battalion will also replace a temporary, mostly reservist force at Guantanamo.

Sailor dies of injuries from sub accident

The Associated Press

HONOLULU — A sailor injured aboard a nuclear submarine that ran aground about 350 miles south of Guam died Sunday, the Navy said. Twenty-three other crewmembers were being treated for injuries.

The USS San Francisco was headed back to its home port in Guam after sustaining severe damage on Saturday. The incident was under investigation, said Jon Yoshishige, a spokesman for the Pacific Fleet based at Pearl Harbor.

The name of the sailor who died was being withheld pending a mandatory 24-hour wait-

ing period, the Navy said. The sailor's next of kin had been notified.

There were no reports of damage to the 360-foot submarine's reactor plant, which was operating normally, the Navy said. Officials said there was no information on what the submarine struck.

The extent of the damage would not be known until the vessel arrived at Guam on Monday, Yoshishige said.

Navy and Coast Guard aircraft from Guam were sent to monitor the submarine and assist if needed, the Navy said. Officials said the sub has a crew of 137.

Running for a cause



Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Sgt. David Brace, of the 238th Aviation Regiment's F Company, a National Guard unit from Grand Ledge, Mich., speeds toward the finish line during the Camp Buehring 5K Relief Run/Walk in Kuwait. The event was held to raise money for the American Red Cross tsunami relief fund. Brace, 34, finished first with a time of 16 minutes 34 seconds.



Sgt. Major John M. Mersino, senior enlisted advisor for the U.S. European Command, gets a little tearful Saturday during his farewell dinner at Patch Barracks in Stuttgart, Germany, as he talks about the wounded troops he's visited.

CHARLIE COON

Stars and Stripes

In farewell, EUCOM's top enlisted praises military's young warriors

BY CHARLIE COON

Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — When asked what touched him the most about his job, Marine Sgt. Major John M. Mersino said it was the young troops.

The senior enlisted adviser for the U.S. European Command compared them to the revered "greatest generation" of World War II. "I don't think America is watching the generation that is growing up right under their noses," said Mersino, 51. "They're a lot like that generation in my judgment — they go the extra mile and are mature beyond their years."

"We're asking them to do a whole lot more than we have a right to ask them to do, and they welcome the challenge."

Mersino was honored at a dinner Saturday night as he enters his final days as EUCOM's command sergeant major.

There will be a few more fetes in his honor before the farm boy from Michigan retires after 32 years in the corps. Saturday's event at the Swabian Inn on Patch Barracks was for his enlisted colleagues, who toasted him as a compassionate patriot and motivator.

A slide show showed Mersino mingling with Iraqi children and visiting hospitalized troops.

"To a person," Mersino said of the wounded, "they've said, 'When can I get better?' and, 'When can I get back to my unit and get back in the fight?'"

After the side show, Mersino strolled among the approximately 120 guests, weaving between the white linen-covered dinner tables as he made his parting remarks, picking out people by name, extolling the troops while taking gentle jabs at the brass.

"I've never seen a general pull a trigger," he said. "Never seen a colonel pull one, either."

As the top enlisted troop in the European command, which includes every U.S. Marine, airman, soldier and sailor in Europe, most of Africa and Russia, Mersino's job ranged from advocating for the most junior servicemember to advising four-star generals.

"The effect he has on my troops is just so profound," said 1st Lt. Frank Small of the 1st Battalion, 214th Aviation, one of the few officers in Saturday's crowd. Small often flew Mersino by helicopter to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center to visit the wounded.

"He has a personal touch. To every single one of my soldiers he showed genuine care and concern. That's a rarity. One of my

guys doesn't want to be an officer anymore; he wants to be a sergeant major," Small said.

"No matter who he comes in contact with, he just has a way of making that person feel comfortable," said Gunnery Sgt. Juan Allen of U.S. Marine Corps Forces Europe.

"He reaches out to the families as well," added Allen's wife, Angela.

EUCOM's next senior enlisted officer could be announced by the end of the month. Candidates are nominated by the top enlisted members of the four service branches: chief master sergeant of the Air Force, the master chief petty officer of the Navy, and sergeants major of the Army and Marine Corps.

The nominees will be reviewed by EUCOM's deputy commander, Air Force Gen. Charles Wald, who will then make his recommendation to EUCOM's commander, Marine Gen. James L. Jones, who will make the selection.

Mersino said he planned to take a civilian job in Europe after he retires.

"I'm yesterday's news," he told the crowd, motivating to the very end. "Everyone in this room is tomorrow's headline."

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IN THE WORLD

Palestinians choose successor to Arafat

Exit polls show Abbas with clear victory as president

By MOHAMMED DARAGMEH

The Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Palestinians held their first presidential election in nine years Sunday, choosing a successor to longtime leader Yasser Arafat in a vote many across the world hoped would usher in a moderate leadership and revitalize the Middle East peace process.

Mahmoud Abbas candidate of Arafat's ruling Fatah movement, won 66 percent of the vote in the election Sunday, according to an exit poll.

Such a margin of victory would give Abbas a clear mandate to renew peace talks with Israel, rein in militants and reform the corruption-riddled Palestinian Authority.

Abbas' main challenger, Mustafa Barghouti, won 19.7 percent of the vote, according to the poll conducted by the independent Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. Five other candidates are running.

The poll was based on about responses from about 10,000 voters, with an error margin of 3 percentage points.

Voting went relatively smoothly. In one incident, five gunmen burst into an election office, firing into the air and complaining that the names of their relatives had been left off registration lists. In Jerusalem, there was some confusion over voter lists that were eventually resolved, with the help of international observers.

Cabinet minister Saeb Erekat said the Palestinians serve as an example to the Arab world, noting that seven candidates are competing. "This is a message to President Bush, to the rest of the world, that the problem we have here is not the kind of system we have, it's not reform, it's the Israeli occupation," Erekat said.

Bush has said a resumption of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks must be accompanied by sweeping Palestinian government reform. Secretary of State Colin Powell, speaking on CNN, praised the vote as a "moment of opportunity for both sides."

Visiting Sen. John Kerry, who challenged Bush in the 2004 U.S. presidential election, met with candidates in the West Bank. "We're here because we have very, very high hopes for an election that can help move the peace process forward," he said.

Israel said it is ready to meet with Abbas after the election, offering to release Palestinian prisoners if he can halt rocket attacks on Israeli communities.

Polls opened at 7 a.m. across the West Bank, Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem. Voters were slow to arrive, and by noon only about 30 percent had cast ballots. Later in the day, election officials simplified procedures, allowing voters to cast ballots in any of more than 1,000 locations, rather than where they registered.

This enabled thousands of members of the Palestinian security services — likely Abbas supporters — to cast ballots where they serve, rather than having to travel to their hometowns.

Police officer Mohammed Juma was one of the first voters at the Jail school in Gaza City. He turned his pistol before casting his vote for Abbas. "I believe he is the only one capable of taking us to the safe side of this ocean of conflict," he said.

Abbas, accompanied by his family, voted at Arafat's former headquarters in Ramallah. "The election is going well and that indicates that the Palestinian people are heading toward democracy," he said.

Abbas needs a strong showing — analysts say perhaps up to two-thirds of the vote — to deal effectively with both militants and Israel. Recent polls forecast Abbas getting anywhere from 52 percent to 65 percent. Five other candidates are running.

Only minor problems were reported in Gaza and the West Bank, such as an Israeli failure to remove boulders from a road leading to a polling station near Nablis.

But in Jerusalem, Palestinians and international observers complained of confusion over registration lists, and Palestinians accused Israel of trying to intimidate them.

By prior agreement with Israel, only about 5,000 of 120,000 eligible voters in Jerusalem were permitted to vote in post offices in the city. The others had to go to city suburbs to cast ballots.

At the main polling station in Jerusalem, vans hired by Fatah transported voters to the outgoing polling stations.

"I would have loved to vote inside Jerusalem in freedom and without any fears," said Asma Shiyukhi, a resident of Jerusalem's old city who traveled to the suburb of Za'at to vote.



A Palestinian boy, a supporter of presidential candidate Mahmoud Abbas shouts slogans Sunday outside a polling station in the village of Abu Di, in the outskirts of Jerusalem. Palestinians on Sunday held their first presidential election in nine years, choosing a successor to longtime leader Yasser Arafat in a vote that many hoped would revitalize the Mideast peace process.

Unable to vote, refugees watch events closely

By JAMAL HALABY

The Associated Press

BAQA'A CAMP, Jordan — Yehya Shatarat punched his fist into his hand as he watched satellite television pictures of Palestinians in the West Bank voting for a successor to the late Yasser Arafat.

"Mahmoud Abbas is definitely the winner and he will destroy us completely because he sold out the Palestinian cause to Israel and America a long time ago," said the 28-year-old refugee, referring to the Palestinian who is expected to easily win the presidential race.

Shatarat was not the only one in the camps scattered across the Middle East who expressed frustration at having no say in choosing their leaders who have no control over Israel to decide the fate of Palestinian refugees. Israeli flatly rejects allowing hundreds of thousands of refugees and their descendants to return to homes abandoned in the 1948 and 1967 Middle East wars, saying that would destroy the country as a Jewish majority state.

Only Palestinians in the territories were able to cast ballots on Sunday, with officials explaining that was because the vote was for local government and institutions.



Armed members of the Popular Democratic Front cast their votes Sunday at a mock polling station in the Ein el-Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp in southern Lebanon. Palestinians in Lebanon are not eligible to vote in the real elections.

"How can they ignore our right to pick our leader?" asked Haitham Abul-Saad, 30, bitterly rebuking Palestinian leaders as he mingled with Shatarat and other friends at a smoke-filled room in a sports club in Baqaa, 17 miles northwest of the Jordanian city of Amman.

"They (Palestinian officials) seem concerned that the refugees may want a hard-line leader because they know well that retrieving our occupied lands will not be achieved without weapons, without struggle, without blood," he said.

In Lebanon, supporters of the radical

Popular Democratic Front set up a mock polling station outside the front's offices in the Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp on the southern fringes of Sidon, 28 miles south of Beirut. Crowds cheered as supporters cast mock ballots for Tayseer Khaleel, the front's candidate.

In Syria, Palestinian refugee Naïem Rajdan, 53, said he would have liked to have voted. But Ahmed Jibril, secretary-general of the Syria-based Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command, dismissed Sunday's balloting as an exercise "conducted under occupation" and engineered to bring Abbas to power.

Blair says Bush should lead talks on state creation

The Associated Press

LONDON — British Prime Minister Tony Blair said Sunday that he expected President Bush to lead final status negotiations on the creation of a Palestinian state after negotiations to make such a state viable.

Blair said a London conference on strengthening and reforming the Palestinian administration, its security forces and financial situation would take place March 1-2. He said talks would be used to prepare Palestinians for the possibility of a proper state.

"If we can provide the help for the Palestinians to develop that basic infrastructure of a viable state, then (Bush) is prepared to do the negotiations that make it viable in terms of its territory too," Blair told British Broadcasting Corp. TV.

"If we can get that conference successfully moving ahead and then the Israeli disengagement from part of the occupied territories, then I believe that President Bush will be willing in those circumstances to get back into the road map and get back into the conferences that can lead to a proper final status resolution."

Storms kill at least 13 across northern Europe

BY AUDREY WOODS

The Associated Press

LONDON — Powerful winds and heavy rain swept across northern Europe overnight from Britain to Russia, leaving at least 13 dead by Sunday, inundating areas of Britain and suspending key air and sea transport. Hundreds of thousands of homes lost power.

Key bridges and airports were temporarily closed, and rail and ferry traffic was badly disrupted. High water in the Russian port city of St. Petersburg forced the closure of some subway stations.

The storm was one of the worst to hit Scandinavia in years, with winds clocked in some areas at more than 75 mph, meteorologists said.

At least six people died in Sweden, in-

cluding two whose cars were hit by falling tree branches, police and rescue officials said. One motorist died in Denmark when a tree crashed onto his car in Odense, 105 miles west of Copenhagen, and three others were killed by debris and falling trees.

Severe gales battered north Britain, and heavy rains caused serious flooding, particularly in the northwest county of Cumbria, where the city of Carlisle was cut off by the swollen River Eden, and people climbed to upper stories to escape the rising floodwaters.

Police asked boat owners to help them reach Carlisle residents, and military helicopters were called in to lift about a dozen people from rooftops.

"We've rescued a 90-year-old man. We've had a family including a young baby rescued out of an upstairs window," said Royal Air Force spokesman Mike Mulford.

Three people were reported dead in the Carlisle area, but details of the deaths were not immediately released. At least one other person was reported swept away in a swollen river in Yorkshire county, northern England.

In the north German state of Schleswig-Holstein, winds damaged houses and forced the shutdown of train and ferry links and highway bridges. Two 20-year-old men, whose kayak capsized on a lake near the town of Landweil were missing, police said.

In St. Petersburg, on the Gulf of Finland, some streets were flooded and six subway stations were shut Sunday morning because water levels on the gulf were dangerously high, a city emergency official said. Three stations were reopened after the water level receded somewhat, he said.

The water in the Neva River and the canals of the former Imperial capital appeared about 6.6 feet higher than normal, reaching within two feet of street level, while docks for riverboats and steps leading down to the river were flooded.

In Finland, sea levels reached record highs, cutting off several coastal roads, but no major damage was reported. Rescue teams piled thousands of sandbags and large bales of recycled paper on the waterfront in downtown Helsinki near the president's palace where the sea rose 5 feet above normal levels onto the streets and market place.

More than 400,000 Swedish households were without power Sunday morning, authorities said. In Denmark, about 60,000 households lost electricity.



AP Photos

Sudan's Vice President Ali Osman Taha, left, and John Garang, chairman of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army, sign peace agreement documents Sunday at Nyayo Stadium in Nairobi, Kenya. They are watched by Kenya's President Mwai Kibaki, third left, and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, fourth left.

Sudan, rebels sign peace agreement

BY CHRIS TOMLINSON

The Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya — Sudan's government and the country's main rebel leader signed a comprehensive peace agreement to end Africa's longest-running conflict Sunday, concluding an eight-year process to stop a civil war that has cost more than 2 million lives since 1983.

In a lavish ceremony in neighboring Kenya — where the talks were based — Sudanese Vice President Ali Osman Taha and John Garang, chairman of the Sudan People's Liberation Army, signed the peace agreement.

The north-south war has pitted Sudan's Islamic-dominated government against rebels seeking greater autonomy and a greater share of the country's wealth for the largely animist south. The con-



An SPLA supporter celebrates the peace deal in Nairobi, Kenya.

flikt is blamed for more than 2 million deaths, primarily from war-induced famine and disease.

But while Sudanese celebrated the peace deal, the massive problems facing the country and the

drumatic compromises made by both sides will make implementing the agreement extremely difficult. Sudan has been at war with itself for 40 of the last 50 years.

"A peace settlement that does not seriously address the causes of conflict in Darfur and other areas cannot be comprehensive, nor can it be sustained without community involvement," Cynthia Gaigals, a spokeswoman for six international aid agencies working in Sudan. "The next six months are the most fragile for this fledgling peace deal."

Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, Italy's Foreign Minister Gianfranco Fini and Norwegian International Development Minister Hilde Johnson signed as witnesses to the agreement.

The deal "will close a dark chapter in the history of Sudan," Powell said.

Italy's smokers take last puffs before new law goes into effect

BY FRANCESCA D'EMILIO

The Associated Press

ROME — Smokers in Italy took their last puffs in smoky bars and trattorias Sunday, hours before the start of a tough law barring smoking in offices, eateries, pubs and other public places.

The outdoors, private homes, and restaurants and bars with ventilated smoking rooms were virtually the only places spared from the law, which was championed by Italy's Health Minister Giuliano Sirchia, a physician.

Enforcement of the law was to begin at 12:01 a.m. Monday, when many bars and clubs will still be serving customers.

In a restaurant near Viterbo, north of Rome, a dozen cigar aficionados reserved a table for a kind of farewell dinner, promising to puff away on Tuscan and Cuban cigars between courses before the clock struck midnight, the Italian news agency ANSA reported.

"In the end we'll get used to not smoking in restaurants or bars, just like we've already had to do, for example, in trains and planes," said Francesca Cola, a 38-year-old clothing store owner, smoking a cigarette as she sat outside a cafe on Rome's central Piazza Venezia.

Her annoyance, however, was plain. "I think this is excessive zeal against smokers, it's a witch hunt," she said, and pledged to throw more dinner parties and eat out less frequently.

The law, described as one of the toughest in Europe, bans smoking on public transport and in hospitals, cinemas and schools.

In a country where restaurant diners rarely ask if drifting smoke is bothersome to others and doctors and visitors will puff

"I think this is excessive zeal against smokers, it's a witch hunt."

Francesca Cola
clothing store owner

away in hospital corridors, about 26 percent of people smoke, according to Health Ministry figures.

Smokers now face fines from caught lighting up where they shouldn't. Owners of premises that close an eye to smoking face

stiffer fines, as high as \$2,000. Bars and restaurants have lobbied for more time to prepare no-smoking zones, but have been denied. The law, approved in 2003, was to have gone into effect in December, but an extension was granted through the holiday period.

Some Italian newsmen greeted the ban with humor. An editorial cartoon on the front page of Turin daily La Stampa on Sunday showed a prisoner about to be executed asking, "Can I smoke a last cigarette?" A soldier replied: "No. It could be bad for your health."

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A tsunami survivor wades through a still-flooded portion of Banda Aceh, Indonesia, on Sunday as a damaged vehicle lies in the background. As rescuers and soldiers conduct a massive clean-up effort, gunfire erupted near a U.N. compound where relief workers have been gathering. No one was hurt in what one U.N. official said "was probably one person shooting a few rounds and that was it." Elsewhere, violent clashes between Christians and Hindus in Sri Lanka left three people dead and 37 wounded.

AP



Violence shakes tsunami-hit areas

Gunfire erupts in Indonesia; religious clashes in Sri Lanka kill 3

BY JOCELYN GECKER

The Associated Press

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia — Indonesian warned aid workers Sunday that separatist rebels had infiltrated camps sheltering survivors of the Dec. 26 tsunami as fears escalated that the stricken area's long-simmering insurgency could hamper efforts to help victims.

Violence in tsunami-ravaged Sri Lanka also revived security fears for aid workers setting up operations there. Christians and Hindus clashed in the eastern part of the country, where a massive aid effort is underway. At least three people were killed and 37 injured.

In Banda Aceh, gunfire echoed through the main tsunami-hit city on Indonesia's Sumatra island Sunday. Indonesian authorities blamed separatist rebels for the shooting near the U.N. compound in Banda Aceh.

No aid workers were injured in either incident. Meanwhile a tropical downpour lashed the airport in the provincial capital, turning a major hub for relief supplies into a muddy mess.

Two weeks after walls of water flattened wide swaths of coastland around the Indian Ocean, people were still emerging from villages as bodies were being pulled from the mud and debris as the death toll in 11 countries in Asia and Africa passed 150,000.

Secretary of State Colin Powell said Sunday the United States must plan to give long-term support to Indian Ocean nations hit by last month's tsunami as they cope with the slow process of recovery.

Powell, who toured the region last week, said he will tell President Bush in a meeting Monday that the United States will need to go beyond the immediate relief sent since the tsunami struck on Dec. 26.

The secretary said on ABC's "This Week" he will advise Bush "that this is a long-term prospect, that we use our money not just for immediate humanitarian relief, but for economic assistance, for infrastructure development."

About 400 Sri Lankans gathered in a peaceful protest Sunday opposite the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees office in the predominantly Tamil city of Jaffna, demanding that U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan visit the northern region to inspect damage caused by the tsunami.

The Tigers, who have fought a 20-year war for a Tamil homeland, invited Annan to tour the northern province. But government officials said they could not guarantee the U.N. chief's safety.

Annan said Sunday that he hoped it would not strain relations between the United Nations and the rebel group.

"I'm hoping to come back and be able to visit all areas of the country, not only those required, but also to celebrate peace," he said. "The U.N. is not here to take sides."

U.N. officials in Indonesia downplayed the shooting, which took place near the home of a deputy provincial police chief, saying there was no indication the gunfire targeted efforts to feed the disaster's hungry and homeless.

"We don't believe that aid workers are targets," said Joel Boutrouse, a U.N. relief

official in Aceh. "We were told by guards that it was probably one person shooting a few rounds and that was it."

Indonesian officials regularly blame Free Aceh Movement rebels for shootings and violence in Aceh, even if there is sometimes little evidence of their involvement.

The rebels have waged a separatist war in Aceh for nearly three decades. Thousands have been killed. There was an unofficial truce after last month's disaster, which left more than 100,000 dead in the province, but a series of recent skirmishes have prompted Indonesia's military to step up patrols for the guerrillas.

Adding to security concerns is the appearance of Laskar Mujahidin, an extremist group with alleged links to al-Qaida. The group, which has set up an aid camp, says it is there to help and won't target foreigners, but its reassurances haven't dampened concerns.

The U.S. military, which says it has about 150 service personnel on the ground in Sumatra and 8,000 offshore, said aid workers must remain vigilant while working in restive areas.

"Security is a constant planning factor in all that we do," U.S. Army aid coordinator Maj. Nelson Chang said.

It's the middle of the rainy season in Indonesia and the pounding downpours could further complicate a relief effort already hamstrung by damaged infrastructure, including roads and bridges washed away.

World governments, led by Australia and Germany, have pledged nearly \$4 billion in aid — the biggest relief package ever.

India to evaluate technology for early warning system

The Associated Press

NEW DELHI — India will search for the best technology available to set up an early warning system to protect the country from future tsunamis, the defense minister said Sunday.

No such system exists for the Indian Ocean, where a strong earthquake off Indonesia caused a tsunami on Dec. 26 that killed more than 150,000 people in southern Asia and east Africa, including India and its Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Leaders of the affected nations agreed to set up a regionwide tsunami warning system at an emergency meeting in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta last week, but didn't provide any details of the plan.

On Sunday, leaders of India's major political parties met with the prime minister to discuss relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in the tsunami-hit areas.

"A government committee has been appointed to look into what technology could be made available," Defense Minister Pranab Mukherjee told reporters after the meeting.

He did not say whether such equipment would also provide early warnings for other countries.

The government says it would take up to 2 1/2 years to put an advance warning system into place and it could cost up to \$27 million. In India, 10,022 people are confirmed to have died in the tsunami and 5,617 are missing and presumed dead, Mukherjee said.

Pipeline hit kills woman in Pakistan

BY NASEER KAKAR

The Associated Press

QUETTA, Pakistan — Assassians fired rockets at wells and a gas pipeline in southwestern Pakistan, killing a woman and wounding 14 other people, officials said Sunday.

One rocket struck the pipeline, sparking a fire and temporarily disrupting gas supply to a power generator late Saturday in Sui, a tribal town about 215 miles southeast of Quetta, said Mohammed Akbar, a local government official. He said the supply was expected to resume later Sunday.

Other rockets landed near four guard posts at the gas installations operated by Pakistan Petroleum Ltd. The company's guards returned fire, but it was not known if the assassins suffered any casualties, Akbar said.

A woman died later at a hospital of injuries suffered when she was hit by rocket shrapnel landing in a village near the gas installations, said Noor Ahmed, a local police officer.

Forty-two others were injured, including two seriously. The village is located between the gas installations and an area from where the rockets were believed to have been fired, Ahmed said.

The attack came after a woman and her two children were killed Friday when assassins fired rockets and rifles on the PPL facility in the town.

Akbar, the government administrator in Sui, blamed tribesmen for the latest attack but did not name any group.

In Quetta, the capital of southwestern Baluchistan province where Sui is located, Mir Azad Baluch, a man who claims to speak for the little-known Baluchistan Liberation Army, claimed responsibility for Saturday's assault in telephone calls to newspaper offices.

4 dead after shootout with Saudi police

BY ABDULLAH AL-SHIBRI

The Associated Press

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — Saudi police killed four militants in the kingdom's capital after the militants fled their desert tent Sunday while throwing hand grenades at surrounding forces, the Interior Ministry said.

Authorities ordered the militants to surrender after surrounding their tent in Nafud Thowairat, a remote town north of Zilfi province, some 170 miles north of the Saudi capital of Riyadh, the ministry said in a statement carried by the state-run Saudi Press Agency.

But the militants refused and tried to flee in a car while hurling hand grenades, the statement said. The four were killed by the police at about 7:30 a.m. Three Saudi security personnel were slightly injured.

The statement said the four suspects belonged to the "deviant group" — a term used by the government to describe followers of Saudi dissent leader Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida terror network.

Weapons, explosives, ammunition and documents were found in the tent, the statement said without identifying the militants.

Last month, two wanted al-Qaida militants were among 10 extremists killed in clashes with police after they snatched car bombs in the Saudi capital targeted the Interior Ministry and a recruiting center for the kingdom's anti-terrorism forces.

IN THE STATES

Storm pounds California, traps motorists

BY MICHAEL R. BLOOD

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — More heavy rain spread across parts of California on Sunday and snow piled deeper in the mountains as the state sat under a storm system that already had snowbound motorists, caused flooding and even slowed trains.

The latest in a series of storms was blamed for at least four weekend deaths in Southern California, including a homeless man killed Sunday by a landslide. Along the storm's eastward track, two people were killed Saturday by separate avalanches in Utah, authorities said.

Up to 6 inches of rain was ex-

pected Sunday in Southern California with at least 2 feet of snow possible in the region's higher mountains. In Northern California's Sierra Nevada and northern Nevada, winter storm warnings were in effect through Tuesday morning with as much as 5 feet of new snow possible on top of Saturday's accumulations of up to 4.5 feet.

Dozens of Sunday church services and all weekend high school sports events were canceled around Reno, Nev., because the area got 18 inches of snow. The region was still digging out from a Dec. 30 storm that dumped as much as 9 feet of snow in the Sierra and 4 feet in the Reno area.

"A combination of two storms

of this magnitude hasn't occurred in the city of Reno since 1916," National Weather Service forecaster Shane Snyder said.

Major highways across the Sierra between Reno and Sacramento, Calif., were closed for part of Saturday and the heavy snowfall also delayed Amtrak trains through the mountains.

"There was just too much snow on the tracks," said Amtrak spokesman Mark Magliari.

Flash flood warnings were posted throughout Southern California and authorities kept close eye on foothill neighborhoods below the San Bernardino Mountains where slopes burned bare by wildfires were especially prone to mudslides.

Two traffic deaths were blamed on wet pavement on Saturday and one man died when he tried to cross a swollen stream in Ventura County, police reported.

The storms have been caused by cold low pressure off Oregon's coast colliding with a stream of moist air from the southern Pacific known as a "Pineapple Express," said forecaster Ted Mackenzie of the National Weather Service.

"These are pretty rare events



A snowbound Union Pacific freight train gets assistance in Truckee, Calif., as consecutive snowstorms hit the Sierra Nevada range, Saturday.

and when they hit, they hit hard," Mackenzie said. "It's very dangerous."

On Saturday, up to 4 feet of snow stalled motorists in their cars along a 5-mile stretch of highway between the Snow Valley ski resort and the Big Bear dam in the San Bernardino Mountains about 90 miles east of Los Angeles. Rescue crews had to use tracked vehicles to rescue people.

At lower elevations, landslides

closed roads in San Bernardino and Santa Barbara counties, and firefighters rescued at least three people whose cars got stuck in rushing water.

Elsewhere, flooding along the Ohio River had chased hundreds of Ohio, West Virginia and Kentucky residents from their homes.

Meteorologists predicted the river would reach its highest level in eight years at Louisville, Ky., this week at about 5 feet above flood stage.

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OPINION

Reviewed as 'infidels,' yet to the rescue again

The contrast could not have been clearer. The day President Bush recruited former Presidents Bill Clinton and G.W. Bush to generate tsunami-relief donations

private

Deroy Murdock



gov), Osama bin Laden's comrades detonated three bombs in Baghdad, killing 16 Iraqi cops and soldiers toiling to rebuild their country.

Once again, "the Great Satan" rescues endangered Muslims while Islamic zealots blew their co-religionists to bits. As the

South Asian recovery unfolds, American public diplomacy should highlight this comparison to Muslims worldwide.

Countless Muslims were battered on "Black Sunday." Indonesia, Earth's most populous Islamic nation, was lashed hardest with 94,200 fatalities by Wednesday. Sri Lanka and India, both with significant Muslim minorities, have lost 30,240 and 9,675 people, respectively, so far. Largely spared on Dec. 26, an increasingly violent Muslim citizenry lives in southern Thailand, a country that has lost 5,288. Astonishingly, in Somalia and Tanzania, the 2004 tsunami west of the massive Indonesian earthquake that triggered this emergency — the tsunami respectively killed 200 and 10 among their largely Muslim populations.

These and other nations have begun to see America's \$350 million in government relief. At least \$190 million in private assistance is en route, from multi-million-dollar corporate contributions to double-digit sums gleaned from piggy banks and church collection plates.

At an estimated \$4 million daily, the Penta-

gon has mobilized its largest Asian military operation since Saigon fell to communism (www.pacom.mil). By the middle of last week, 13,435 GIs had used 21 vessels, 41 airplanes and 50 helicopters to deliver 305 tons of supplies. U.S. warships desalinate water for the parched. There is much more help on the way.

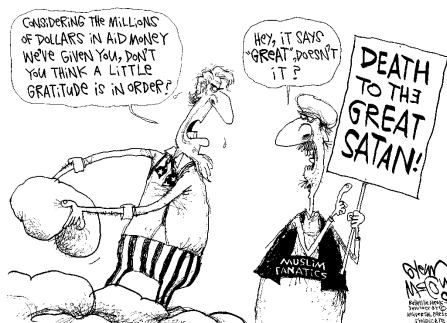
All this from a nation that our Islamofascist enemies claim is committed to vanquishing their Muslim brethren.

America and the civilized world, the "infidels" in Islamofascist's crosshairs, are locked in a death match with this toxic ideology and its enthusiasts. Winning this struggle involves swaying rank-and-file Muslims around the world, many of whom call South Asia home. They and their Middle Eastern peers have eyes and ears attached to their hearts and minds. American press officers at embassies in Muslim nations should communicate this ongoing story via the Voice of America, local media outlets, public appearances, conversations with pedestrians on the Arab street, and even advertising, where available.

They also should observe that this matches America's record of aiding at-risk Muslims. The United States saved Muslims in Bosnia and Kosovo, for instance, and donated \$2.5 billion in development assistance to the Middle East and Northern Africa in 2003 alone, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Supply boxes and food sacks should be emblazoned with American flags. GIs who distribute that assistance should wear Old Glory on their uniforms. Private-sector American companies should be offered T-shirts that identify them as U.S. ambassadors of good will.

We also should compare our generosity to the silence and sluggishness of our foes. To date, bin Laden has yet to offer a public word of sympathy regarding the hundreds of thousands of Muslims this calamity has killed, maimed and dispossessed. The resu-



sive billionaire apparently has shared none of his wealth with the Muslims he claims to cherish.

He has not even publicly invited fellow Muslims to open their wallets to aid those in, say, Banda Aceh, the largely Islamic Sumatran city erased like a misspelled word just 20 minutes after a 9-magnitude earthquake as ferocious as 10,000 Nagasakis.

While \$350 million in government help now makes America the fourth-largest donor nation (behind Australia's \$810 million, Germany's \$680 million, and Japan's \$500 million), no Muslim country rated among the top 10 benefactors. Before pledging \$30 million Tuesday, 19th-ranked Saudi Arabia offered just \$10 million. Sandra Bullock, an actress bereft of mineral resources,

somehow gave the Red Cross \$1 million (www.redcross.org).

Meanwhile, legislator Walid Tabtabai wrote in Kuwait's Al Watan daily that the deadly waves were "a gift for believers and punishment for the unjust." Radical Islamic commentator Abu Zaynab called this catastrophe "a warning from Allah" to those who "delay and neglect prayers ... indulge in free mixing ... and listen to music and songs."

America leads this massive mission of mercy because it is the right thing to do. That it benefits many Muslims who Islamofascists hope to infuse with hate is even more reason for us to show them our love.

Deroy Murdock is a columnist with Scripps Howard News Service and a senior fellow at the Atlas Economic Research Foundation in Fairfax, Va.

Fast diets help you lose 5, but they're far from fab

BY MICHAEL FUMENTO

Scripps Howard

This month millions of Americans made a New Year's resolution to lose weight. By this week, many will be falling off the wagon. They will continue to be part of a national tragedy in which 65 percent of Americans are overweight or obese. Medical studies rarely show what works — just what doesn't.

Thus a report in the Jan. 4 *Annals of Internal Medicine* was slightly more helpful than the evaluation in *Time* of the nation's most popular weight-loss programs. It found that for nine there was either no evidence that they worked or, indeed, evidence that they didn't. One lonely plan, however, *Weight Watchers*, was somewhat effective.

Yet even the *Weight Watchers* results were hardly spectacular. In the single study with evaluating, members lost only 5 percent of their initial weight (around 10 pounds) and kept about half that off for at least two years.

So where does a heavyweight turn? Approved weight-loss drugs are just better than nothing, though one that may be available next year, *Acomplia*, will be the best yet judging by tests so far.

Fad diets still don't work. It appears even the low-carb craze — sparked by a July 2002 *New York Times* Magazine article by Gary Taubes that was essentially an advertisement for Atkins — is dying. According to the research firm NPD Group, the percent of Americans following low-carb diets such as Atkins, South Beach and The Zone fell by half just from last January to September. Atkins Nutritionals began laying off 40 percent of its employees in September.

The medical literature shows why. Short-term studies seem to vindicate Atkins. But representative of longer ones is that which just appeared in the Jan. 5 *Journal of the American Medical Association*. It found that half of the Atkins dieters couldn't stick with the program for a year. Among those who did, although their beginning average weight was a morbidly obese 200 pounds, their loss at six months was 13 pounds and six months later it was eight pounds.

People like fad diets because they promise a free lunch, at least as far as calories are concerned. How else to explain the incredible success of diet books from gurus who are (or were when they died) fat themselves, in-

cluding Atkins, Andrew Weil and "Dr. Phil" McGraw? Taking weight-loss advice from these fat cats is like receiving religious tolerance lessons from Osama bin Laden.

This year, why not resolve to try a new tack? Instead of putting so much emphasis on input, try putting more on output. Consider information collected from the National Weight Control Registry, a group of about 4,000 people who lost an average of 60 pounds and kept off at least 30 pounds for more than six years. They do limit their calories to about 1,800 a day, but more than 90 percent also regularly exercise.

More weight-loss specialists also seem to be realizing the advantages of resistance exercise — free weights or machines with steel

plates, rubber bands, or bendable plastic rods. With aerobic exercise, you burn calories while doing it. But with resistance training you build muscle tissue that revs up your metabolism so you burn more calories 24/7. I attribute most of my 35-pound weight loss (maintained for seven years) to Bowflex, though I also bike ride and watch what I eat.

Having begun with words of discouragement, I conclude with the opposite: No matter how often you've failed to lose weight, there is no law — physical or otherwise — saying you'll fail this time. If you fall off the wagon, dust yourself off and get back on.

Michael Fumento is a senior fellow at the Atlas Economic Research Foundation in Fairfax, Va.

Mallard Fillmore

BY BRUCE TINSLEY



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U.N. audits bare lapses in oil-for-food program

BY DESMOND BUTLER

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Internal audits conducted by the United Nations of its oil-for-food program revealed lapses in U.N. oversight that allowed contractors to overcharge by hundreds of thousands of dollars, according to copies obtained by The Associated Press.

Two of the audits examined irregularities including overcharging by two companies that were hired to monitor oil sales and the import of humanitarian goods under the program. Another detailed financial mismanagement by a U.N. agency administering humanitarian aid under the program.

An independent panel led by former Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker, who was ap-

pointed in April by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan to investigate corruption at the oil-for-food program, was set to release 400 pages of the audits on Monday.

But the panel distributed the documents to congressional investigators two days early. A congressional aide provided the AP with copies of three of the 56 audits, including one that found that the United Nations was billed over several years for 31 days of work in June, which only had 30 days.

The \$60 billion oil-for-food program was created as a humanitarian exemption to sanctions imposed on Iraq after the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, which led to the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Beginning in 1996, it allowed Saddam Hussein's government to sell oil and use the proceeds to buy food, medicine and other items.

The series of audits, which were carried out from 1996 to 2003 by the U.N. watchdog, the Office of Internal Oversight Services, have been a source of contention between the United Nations and members of Congress examining allegations of corruption in the program.

The United Nations had refused to release them while Volcker's panel and its investigation, although the world body passed a resolution in December making OIOS reports available to member states who request them.

Though the audits illustrate negligent U.N. management of contracts, a U.N. spokesman said that they also show that the United Nations was monitoring itself during the course of the oil-for-food program.

The audits of the two compa-

nies hired by the United Nations reveal "overpayments, a total lack of U.N. verification of contractor duties performed, and no-bid procedures for additional contracts and extensions," a spokesman for the House International Relations Committee said.

It was unclear what steps the United Nations took to correct the mismanagement uncovered in the reports and to demand repayment from the companies recommended by the auditors.

One audit dated July 3, 2002, examined contracts with Saybolt International BV, a Dutch company that was hired to monitor oil exports from Iraq under the humanitarian program. The report detailed billing by the company exceeding \$2 million.

The company inflated invoices, charged for accommodation of

workers provided by the Iraqi government and exaggerated staffing and other expenses. For example, the report found that the United Nations was billed several years for 31 days of work in June, which only has 30 days.

Another report from July 21, 1999, detailed possible overpayments of more than \$3 million to London-based Lloyd's Register Inspection Ltd., which was hired to inspect and monitor humanitarian goods as they were imported into Iraq. The audit noted that the company billed the United Nations for agents deployed in December 1996, two months before the first contracts for the import of humanitarian supplies were issued. "The contractor without consultation took the decision to deploy all the agents," the report states, costing the United Nations an estimated \$1.97 million.

Conservative columnist dropped after he got \$240,000 from Education Dept.

The Associated Press

CHICAGO — A conservative columnist has been dropped by a major syndication service because he accepted a payment from the Bush administration to promote the No Child Left Behind law to fellow blacks and to give the education secretary media time.

Armstrong Williams, one of the nation's leading black conservative voices, has acknowledged that a company he runs was paid \$240,000 by the Education Department, and he called criticism of his relationship with the department "legitimate."

Tribune Media Services said it told Williams on Friday that it was halting distribution of his weekly newspaper column.

The company, a subsidiary of The Tribune Co., said it accepted his explanation that the payment was for advertising on his radio and television programs.

"Nevertheless, accepting compensation in any form from an entity that serves as a subject of his weekly newspaper column creates, in the very least, the appearance of a conflict of interest. Under these circumstances, readers may well ask themselves if the views expressed in his columns are his own, or whether they have been purchased by a third party," a statement said.

Williams also hosts a radio show and appears regularly on CNN as a commentator. CNN said it would evaluate the situation, pointing out that Williams has no formal contract with the network. "We will consider very seriously this issue before booking him as a guest again," said CNN spokeswoman Megan Mahoney.

The contract required Williams' company, the Graham Williams Group, to produce radio and TV spots featuring one-minute "reads" by Education Secretary Rod Paige and to allow Paige and other department officials to appear as studio guests with Williams.

"I thought we in the media were supposed to be watchdogs, not lapdogs. I thought we had an administration headed by a president who took an oath to uphold the First Amendment, not try to rent it."

Bryan Monroe

assistant vice president-news at Knight Ridder and vice president-print for the National Association of Black Journalists

Williams also was to use his influence with other black journalists to get them to discuss No Child Left Behind, a centerpiece of President Bush's domestic agenda, which aims to raise achievement among poor and minority children and penalizes many schools that don't make progress.

The National Association of Black Journalists expressed disappointment in Williams, who is not a member of the group. "I thought we in the media were supposed to be watchdogs, not lapdogs," said NABJ Vice President-Print Bryan Monroe.

"I thought we had an administration headed by a president who took an oath to uphold the First Amendment, not try to rent it," said Monroe, who also is assistant

vice president-news at Knight Ridder.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan said Friday that the decisions on the contract were made by the Education Department.

The Education Department defended its decision as a "permissible use of taxpayer funds under legal government contracting procedures." The point was to help parents, particularly in poor and minority communities, understand the benefits of the law, the department said.

The radio show "The Right Side," which Williams both hosts and owns, is carried by the Lynchburg, Va.-based Liberty Channel, which is affiliated with the Rev. Jerry Falwell, by Sky Angel satellite network, a Christian organization, and by Hunt Valley, Md.-based Sinclair Broadcast Group of Hunt Valley, Md.

Messages seeking comment were left Saturday from the Liberty Channel, TV One and Sinclair, but there was no immediate response.

His other show, "On Point" where Williams interviews network news anchors, is carried by the Lynchburg, Va.-based Liberty Channel, which is affiliated with the Rev. Jerry Falwell, by Sky Angel satellite network, a Christian organization, and by Hunt Valley, Md.-based Sinclair Broadcast Group of Hunt Valley, Md.

Williams said the criticism was "legitimate." "Even though I'm not a journalist — I'm a commentator — I feel I should be held to the media ethics standard," he told The Associated Press on Friday. "My judgment was not the best. I wouldn't do it again, and I learned from it."

Information about the contract with Williams was first reported by USA Today and Williams' Web site, www.armstrongwilliams.com, carried the text of the newspaper's article.

Troops returning to Iraq



Two of the 19,000 troops, stationed at Fort Stewart, Ga., and part of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division, wait to board a chartered airplane Saturday at Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, Ga., to deploy to Iraq. The division, which helped lead the charge to Baghdad, is the first Army division tapped to return to Iraq since the March 2003 invasion.

Substitute teacher fired over alleged sexual misconduct

The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — A substitute teacher who was fired in Philadelphia because of alleged sexual misconduct got work in another district because state law requires notification of such incidents only for full-time teachers, officials said.

Herbert Mitchell, 45, was at his job at Cheltenham High School in Montgomery County for only a few months when a 15-year-old girl accused him of kissing and groping her at his apartment. The girl said Mitchell lured her there in late December on the pretense of picking up some test papers.

Officials at Cheltenham High said they were unaware that Mitchell had lost a job teaching in Philadelphia in September after a student there accused him of making sexual advances.

Mitchell also had been convicted of assault in 1990 in Virginia, according to a Montgomery County prosecutor, but Pennsylvania law does not require school officials to check out-of-state criminal records if a prospective teacher has lived in the state for two or more years.

Mitchell's attorney, Paul Peters III, said his client maintains his innocence. Mitchell was arrested on Dec. 31 and was jailed on \$100,000 cash bail.

Advocacy groups irked over rape treatment guidelines

Justice Dept. paper leaves out 'morning-after pill'

BY DAVID CRARY
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Scores of advocacy groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union and Planned Parenthood, assailed new Justice Department guidelines for treating rape victims Thursday because the detailed procedures make no mention of emergency contraception as an option that could spare some women an unwanted pregnancy.

The result is "a glaring omission in an otherwise thorough document," the groups said in a letter sent to Diane Stuart, director of the Justice Department's Office on Violence Against Women.

Gloria Feldt, president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, called the omission "a blatant example of politics taking precedence over the emotion-

al and physical health needs of women."

Her organization, and other groups, contend that information about emergency contraception was included in an early draft of the guidelines, then removed from the final version because of political concerns.

A Justice Department spokesman, Eric Holland, said Stuart's office had received the protest letter and would "review its contents carefully." The department offered no immediate comment on the specifics of the complaints.

Many major medical groups support the use of emergency contraception, and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends that it be offered to all sexual assault victims who are at risk of pregnancy. But many conservative groups contend that use of emergency con-

traception can be a form of abortion in cases where fertilization has already occurred.

More than 93,000 rapes were reported in the United States last year, according to the FBI, and many more went unreported.

Estimates as to how many women became pregnant because of rapes range from 4,000 to 25,000, but advocacy groups say nearly 90 percent of such pregnancies could be prevented if victims had prompt access to emergency contraception.

Commonly known as morning-after pills, emergency contraceptives are a stronger dose of regular birth control pills. They are considered highly effective up to 72 hours after unprotected sex.

The ACLU, in a recent study of 11 states, found that many emergency care facilities do not routinely provide emergency contraception to rape victims.



State Sen. Chuck Wiger, left, Rep. Jerry Dempsey, center, and House Majority Leader Erik Paulsen, right, enjoy a laugh during a conference of state legislators Thursday in Minneapolis where Democrat and Republican lawmakers gathered for a workshop teaching them how to get along. Paulsen and Dempsey are Republicans and Wiger is a Democrat.

Lawmakers learn to bypass bickering

BY PATRICK CONDON
The Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Minnesota legislators, plagued by enough drama and disagreement for a season's worth of plot lines on a reality TV series, decided they needed group therapy.

About 75 senators and representatives voluntarily attended a workshop, "Beyond Bickering and Gridlock," that hoped to answer a question that plagues state lawmakers across the country and members of Congress alike: "Can't we all just get along?"

It's an important question as the 2005 session gets under way.

Last year's session, which crashed and burned after a partisan stalemate, produced few accomplishments but plenty of raw feelings and grudges.

That lack of results is seen as a major factor in Democrats picking up 13 House seats formerly held by Republicans. Since then, lawmakers have been giving major lip service to the need for bipartisanship.

"Compromise is not a four-letter word," said Sen. Sheila Kiseaden, the Legislature's only Independence Party member and the workshop's originator. "All the good ideas don't come from Democrats, and all the good ideas don't come from Republicans. The best ideas come from talking to each other."

Minnesota lawmakers aren't alone in their angst. Political veterans from both major parties and from Congress on down have complained for several years that legislative bodies have lost any sense of collegiality, collaboration or consensus across party lines.

It's likely aggravated by the razor-thin balance of power between Democrats and Republicans nationwide. Minnesota's legislature has 101 Democrats and 99 Republicans; nationwide, there are 3,660 Democratic state legislators and 3,656 Republican state legislators.

"We see that around the country — the more the parties are competitive with one another, the more likely one is going to see this lack of civility break out," said David Schultz, a political science professor at Hamline University in St. Paul.

Officials from the National Conference of State Legislatures, which helped with the workshop, said similar exercises are becoming popular in other states as well.

"Every legislature's issues are a little different," said Bruce Feustel, a senior fellow at NCSL. "We're not saying abandon your partisan beliefs. Be very clear about what you want from the beginning — but accomplishing that requires you to work with others who want different things."

Scored-earth partisanship is particularly noticeable in Minnesota, with its long tradition of good government and moderation. Thursday's workshop at the University of Minnesota's Hubert H. Humphrey Center was attended by members from both parties and both houses, veteran legislators and freshmen alike.

"Sometimes I just want to take everybody together into one room, lock the door, and say, 'We're gonna talk now, we're going to get this settled once and for all,'" said Sen. Claire Robling, a Republican. "But I don't have that power."

When workshop attendees shared their feelings, they did find common ground — mainly when they talked about what's causing the lack of civility. Among the culprits mentioned were the media, interest groups, legislative leaders, committee chairmen, a campaign season that never seems to end, and strict ethics rules that some lawmakers said inhibits them from socializing with each other.

Robling said many legislators have had their hands tied in recent years by promises they've made to activists in order to get party support.

Dentist indicted in wife's death

BY ERIN HAINES
The Associated Press

LAWRENCEVILLE, Ga. — A dentist recently charged with killing his college girlfriend in 1990 was indicted for the similar shooting death of his estranged wife, whose family's refusal to believe she committed suicide prompted a new look at the earlier death.

A grand jury indicted Dr. Barton Corbin on Wednesday on charges of felony murder, murder and a firearms violation in the death of his wife, Jennifer, a preschool teacher. The couple's 7-year-old son found her body Dec. 4 in the family's home in the northwest Atlanta suburb of Bu-

Ga. man already charged with killing girlfriend; deaths once thought suicides

ford. She had been shot in the head and a revolver was found next to her on a bed.

News of Jennifer Corbin's death led investigators in Augusta to look closer at the 1990 death of Dorothy "Dolly" Hearn, a fellow dental student who was Barton Corbin's girlfriend. That case was presented to a grand jury and Corbin was indicted Dec. 22 with felony and malice murder in Hearn's death.

A gag order was issued in the

Corbin case Wednesday, preventing neighbors and others connected to the investigation from talking to the media about the case.

Jennifer Corbin's family pushed for the latest indictment against her husband, refusing to believe that she killed herself and raising suspicions about Hearn's death years ago.

Court records show Barton Corbin, 41, had filed for a divorce from Jennifer Corbin, 33, on Nov. 29, seeking custody of their two sons.



Rhein BMW presents
Valentine's Day Greetings
Brought to you by Stars and Stripes

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Greetings publish in Stars and Stripes on February 14!

Messages for the Mid-East edition will also publish on www.strips.com beginning 11 Feb

Deadline for messages 27 Jan 05, Drawing on 14 Feb 05

*No purchase necessary to win.

Fake little blue pills

CA LOS ANGELES — A man has pleaded guilty to smuggling tens of thousands of counterfeit Viagra tablets from China and manufacturing hundreds of thousands more.

Frank Fu Jen Huang, 58, entered his plea the day his trial was to begin. He could face as much as 51 years in prison on charges of conspiracy, trafficking in counterfeit goods and causing a counterfeit drug to be made or sold, authorities said.

The counterfeit pills did not have the right mix of ingredients but looked like the blue pills manufactured by Pfizer Inc., authorities said.

Sentencing was set for March 28.

Breathalyzer replacement

NJ NEWARK — New alcohol-detecting machines to measure motorists' blood-alcohol levels are in the process of replacing the Breathalyzer machines that have been used by New Jersey police for decades. The Sayreville police department became the first in the state to use the Alcotest 7110, which is considered an improvement over the Breathalyzer because it can be employed with less setup time. Breathalyzers, invented in the 1950s, can take as long as 20 minutes to set up before a driver can be tested.

Anti-smoking efforts fail

IL SPRINGFIELD — The American Lung Association of Illinois gave the state's anti-smoking efforts a failing grade for the third year in a row and said local governments should be given more authority to regulate smoking. The association awarded Illinois an "F" in categories such as smoking prevention and children's access to cigarettes. Illinois earned a passing grade in one program — a "C" for its 98-cents-a-pack cigarette tax.

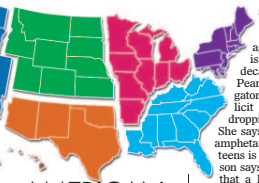
Tainted water

NE GRAND ISLAND — Final well water tests have confirmed fears of more groundwater contamination in the Grand Island area.

Preliminary testing in northeast Grand Island had indicated seven private wells contained industrial solvents at a level not safe for drinking. Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality spokesman Brian McManus says the good news is none of the wells were being used for drinking water. After testing 76 private wells in the area, McManus says 10 others had detectable levels of solvents but were below the drinking water standards. The source of the contamination is suspected to be the Nebraska Solvents Co., which went out of business in 1988.

Race stirs debate

NM SHIPROCK — Navajo President Joe Shirley Jr.'s hiring of a white man as the Navajo Nation's new spokesman for \$81,640 a year is prompting criticism. George Harden's salary eclipses Shuone's own base wage of \$55,000. Duane Yazzie, the president of the Navajo's Shiprock chap-



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

ter, argues the salary is unwarranted and says there were capable Navajo candidates for the job. Harden is married to a Navajo woman, has Navajo children and lives on tribal land.

Prison sex suit

NY WHITE PLAINS — Carolyn Warmus, who was convicted of murdering her lover's wife, has filed a lawsuit claiming she was forced to have sex with correction officers so she could spend time out of her prison cell.

The civil rights suit claims Warmus, 40, also had to endure sexual advances from prison staff while she was monitored under the prison's "tracker" system for high-profile inmates. The Journal News reported.

Warmus said she consented to sex on several occasions in order to gain access to the prison's recreation room, where she could make calls to relatives and watch television.

"This sexual abuse is improper, humiliating, degrading, and embarrassing," she wrote in the suit.

Though she is the daughter of an insurance magnate, Warmus said in the suit that she could not afford a lawyer and asked U.S. District Judge Stephen Robinson to appoint one for her.

Teen drug use down

HI HONOLULU — A state Department of Health survey



Frozen fruit

A crabapple is covered in ice after an ice storm in Kansas City, Mo.

shows that use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco by Hawaii teenagers is declining, and is at its lowest level in a decade. Renee Storm Pearson, principal investigator for the survey, says illicit drug use has been dropping in all categories. She says use of crystal methamphetamine, or "ice," by teens is at a record low. Pearson says the study also shows that a large number of students are still experimenting with drugs and alcohol.

Elderly man subdued

MN ST. PAUL — Police said they are investigating an incident in which an officer pepper-sprayed an 85-year-old man during a traffic stop.

Leon Nins said officer Michael Lee also beat him after he took too long to stop his car. Police deny that and say Nins attacked Lee. Leaders of St. Paul's NAACP chapter and St. Paul African American Leadership Council alleged that race was a factor. Nins is black.

Nins said at a news conference that he was bringing sandwiches and cupcakes to his wife during his daily visit to her nursing home Dec. 27 when Lee tried to pull him over for having expired license tabs.

OD, not taser, killed man

FL HOLLYWOOD — A man who died shortly after police zapped him with a Taser was a victim of a cocaine overdose, not the stun gun, officials said.

Doctors said they found five times the toxic level of cocaine in Kevin Downing's system, the South Florida Sun-Sentinel reported.

Police say Downing was incoherent Dec. 15 in the middle of a busy street. Paramedics who happened by stopped to help Downing, who screamed something at them. They called police, sparking a confrontation. It took at least three officers to control and handcuff Downing, who died later at a hospital.

Teacher's great gift

PA PITTSBURGH — One of Mark Milank's students scored a touchdown when he got him a Christmas gift.

Russell Malloy, 10, honored his favorite teacher — a die-hard Pittsburgh Steelers fan — by getting Hall of Fame running back Franco Harris to autograph a ball for the reading tutor.

Russell wrote Harris a letter after spending \$16 of his own money for the football, and asked Harris to sign it for Milank, Russell's reading tutor at Pittsburgh's Bon Air Elementary School.

Russell had an "in" with Harris — his great aunt, Lisa Knechtel, has cut Harris' hair for 20 years at a downtown salon, and she gave the letter to Harris.

"I bought him a real football with my own money. Could you please sign it to my teacher for Christmas?" the note read.

Gina Malloy said her son repeated the second grade and had struggled in school until Milank tutored him — often regaling the boy with stories of the Steelers' glory days, when Harris helped the team win four Super Bowls from 1975 to 1980.



Around the world

GlobalFlyer, flown by Steve Fossett, comes in for a landing at the Salina Municipal Airport in Kansas. Adventurer Fossett is the first person to circumnavigate the globe solo in a balloon — was set to begin his attempt at the first solo, nonstop flight around the world without refueling from an airport in Salina.



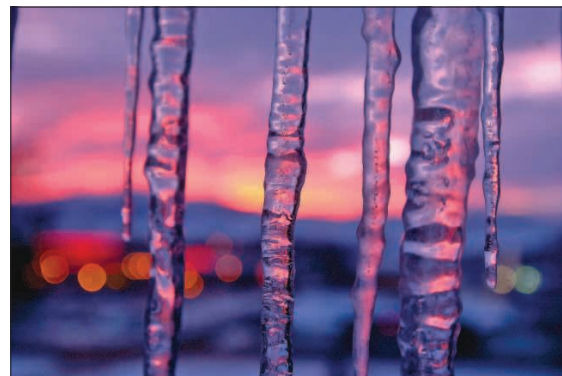
Couch sledding

A sledding hill at Lockwood Park in Racine, Wis.



The race is on

Chris Hotham, 14, steers his snowmobile as Danny DePuis, 12, hangs on as they zip through the snow in Southington, Conn. In the background, Joey DePuis, 14, and his little brother, Ryan, also race through the field.



Icy reflections

Icicles reflect the sunrise at a residence overlooking downtown Elko, Nev.



Flood traps elderly couple

An elderly man and woman stand in flood waters

surrounding rescue from emergency responders from the Guernsey County Sheriff's Office and Antrim Volunteer Fire Department near Cambridge, Ohio.



Under caution

Barry Rowland surrounds himself in caution tape as he repairs some of the carpet in the Chamber of the Texas Senate in Austin, Texas.

Parents take detention

TX PEARLAND — Susan and Steven Manis say it was their fault their daughter was late for school so they shared her punishment — spending an hour with her in detention.

The couple says their 13-year-old daughter, Jessica Dunkley, was being unfairly punished for being late six times in October and November when the family's van wouldn't start.

So when administrators insisted the Pearland Junior High School East seventh-grader would have to spend an hour in detention, they decided to go with her.

"We're more at fault than she is," said Susan Manis, who had appealed the decision.

Family gets settlement

NY ALBANY — The family of a 24-year-old engineer accidentally killed by police officers will receive \$1.3 million settlement from the city, the largest in its history. Mayor Jerry Jennings and the family of David Scaringe announced the agreement.

Scaringe was struck and killed by a stray bullet fired as officers chased a drunken driver on a busy Albany street on New Year's Eve 2003.

Students escape fire

TN NASHVILLE — Fire damaged a men's dormitory at Fisk University, spreading rapidly through the second floor after starting in a student's room. Assistant Fire Chief Kim Lawson said there were no injuries, largely because only about 20 students had returned from the holiday break. New Livingston Hall houses 150 students. There was no immediate indication how the fire began.

Hooker turns man in

FL HOLLYWOOD — A hooker turned in a customer after seeing child pornography, including a video of an apparent toddler rape, on the man's home computer, police said.

Detective Carlos Negron said police were contacted by the woman, saying that while working at the man's apartment as a prostitute she saw numerous pictures of children and appeared to be between ages 3 and 16 performing sex.

The woman told police that it was a disturbing video that showed the rape of a younger child, perhaps no older than 2. She counseled her to make the call after she left the apartment, the South Florida Sun-Sentinel reported.

Taxis earning more cash

NY NEW YORK — Taxi rider's share has dipped slightly since fares rose last May, but drivers' revenues have risen, the Taxi and Limousine Commission said.

The average cab logged about two fewer miles a day between May and December last year than during the same period in 2003, the TLC said. The seven-month span also saw drivers' average daily revenue rise to \$314 a day, up from the 2003 average of \$263.

Fares rose an average of 26 percent as a result of the May 3 hike, which was meant to compensate for increased cost-of-living for drivers and the cost of installing new technologies.

Temple time line

HI HONOLULU — Ancient agricultural temples on two Hawaiian islands were likely built within a span of 60 years, possibly in one generation, not over several hundred years as was previously believed, according to a new study.

The report, published in the *Journal of Science*, says the temples likely were built during a construction boom on Maui and Molokai from 1580 to 1640 that suggests a rapid consolidation of two independent chiefdoms under one leader.

The new dates were determined by a technique that measures the amount of the element Thorium created by the decaying uranium found in the coral in the temple walls and platforms. The dates coincided with the formation of a single society under the reign of Pi'ilani.

Previously, the temples were dated between 1400 to 1800 from radiocarbon sampling of wood charcoal, the study said.

Accidental shooting

GA ATLANTA — Aimee Buff, 27, was celebrating the New Year with her fiancé at the Peach Drop in downtown Atlanta when she was hit by a bullet that went through her left ear and lodged in her neck.

She is the second woman shot during the celebrations. No arrests have been made. Police say arrests are difficult to make during such large celebrations.

Dad in penalty box

MA SWAMPSCOTT — A Swampscott man who allegedly put a choke hold on an 8-year-old boy following the boy's on-ice tangle with the man's son has been banned indefinitely from attending local youth hockey games.

Jordan Waldman, 51, also could face criminal charges for the Dec. 26 incident after a Salem-Swampscott Youth Hockey Association game against Masconomet.

Waldman allegedly cursed at and shook the boy, his 6-year-old son's teammate. The two boys shoved and elbowed each other as they came off the ice, said Mike Cheever, president of the Salem-Swampscott association.

Other parents intervened.

Pitfalls of cough syrup

CA SAN FRANCISCO — If you drink alcohol, don't drink cough syrup if it's only alcohol-based cough syrup you've sipped.

That was the message from a state appeals court, which this week upheld the one-year license suspension of a 16-year-old girl who was pulled over on a freeway and claimed she had imbibed only a capful of Robitussin.

The driver, Karli Ann Bobus, was stopped in November 2002 by a Highway Patrol officer, who said her car was weaving on the freeway. The officer said her eyes were bloodshot and her speech was slurred. Her blood-alcohol level measured 0.022 percent.

Her license was immediately suspended under a state "zero-tolerance" law that makes it illegal for anyone under 21 to drive with a blood-alcohol content of 0.01 percent or higher, compared with 0.08 percent for an adult.

Stories and photos from wire reports

FACES

Big-top debut for former guardsman

When asked to describe his new job as the newest ringmaster for the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, Tyron McFarlan's answer is short and sweet.

"I'm Willy Wonka and I introduce people to this wonderful, magical world," McFarlan said.

McFarlan, 34, comes to the 135th edition of the "Great-est Show on Earth" with both musical theater and military experience. At age 16, he enlisted in the Army National Guard. McFarlan then completed advanced training while attending college and was ultimately promoted to the rank of captain.

But he's happy to trade his camouflage fatigues for jeweled jackets.

"Coming from a military background, I take pride in wearing a uniform," said McFarlan, who has three costume changes throughout the show. "I know that I'm not stepping into a character because this is not a character. It's something that comes over me."

McFarlan made his three-ring debut Wednesday in Tampa, Fla., but he's been rehearsing for his role as ringmaster for over a month.

McFarlan, a former license examiner and father of a three-year-old daughter, will rule the ring during the 21-city tour. He plans to frequently fly his daughter out for visits. And if he continues as ringmaster for another year, McFarlan might bring her along for the ride.

"I love what I'm doing," McFarlan said. "But with anything this great, there's always a sacrifice."



McFarlan

Royals help pack aid for tsunami victims

Princes William and Harry pitched in Friday to help survivors of the South Asia tsunami, packing aid to be sent to the region.

William, 22, and Harry, 20, sons of Prince Charles and the late Princess Diana, helped pack boxes of emergency supplies for the British Red Cross at a warehouse in Gloucestershire, England. The pair, along with other volunteers, unloaded pallets of toilet paper and shampoo that were packed with other toiletries into hygiene packs to be sent to the Maldives area.

Charles, who is a patron of the Red Cross, visited the group's London headquarters last week to support the relief operation.



Prince William

TV poker craze grows

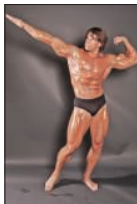
Do you want Kennedy or Tom Leykis on the front line of the battle of the sexes? That's the choice the GSN network is offering. The former MTV personality and the latter personality will be co-hosts of "Poker Royale: Battle of the Sexes."

The latest twist in the trend of card-playing television is to match some of the world's best male and female poker players up against each other in a tournament. Paul Arnold and Greg "Fossil" Raymer are on the men's team, and Kathy Liebert and Evelyn Ng are among the female players.

Arnold impersonator gets TV role

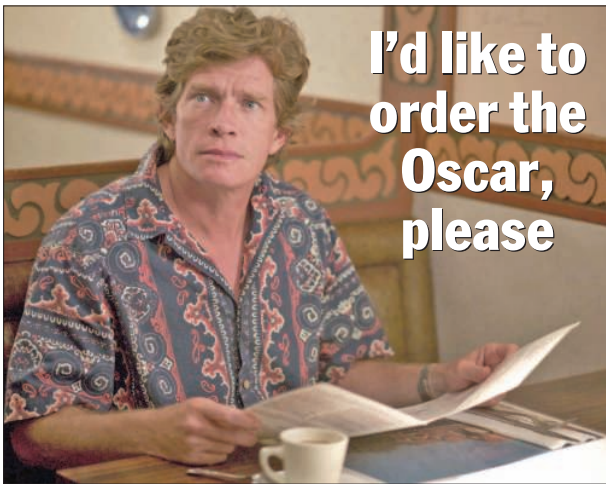
He's Austrian, he bears a striking resemblance to his hero and he's got bulging biceps he likes to call "my little Alps." Who better to play Arnold Schwarzenegger in a U.S. made-for-TV movie than actor Roland Kickinger? Inspired by the Schwarzenegger film "Conan the Barbarian," Kickinger began bodybuilding at a gym in Vienna in the 1980s. Now he's starring as a young Schwarzenegger in "See Arnold Run," a film being made by the cable channel A&E.

Kickinger, a former Mr. Austria who says he befriended Schwarzenegger and has idolized the California governor for years, told Austrian television Thursday it's a dream role.



Kickinger

Stories and photos from The Associated Press



FOX SEARCHLIGHT/AP

Actor Thomas Haden Church appears in a scene from the film "Sideways." Best-known for playing Lowell, the mechanic in the 1990s TV show "Wings," Church portrays a journeyman actor on a last fling before getting married.

Award buzz surrounds Thomas Haden Church for his role in acclaimed movie 'Sideways'

BY JAKE COYLE

The Associated Press

NEW YORK

In "Sideways," Jack, an out-of-work actor, explains to his friend: "There are things I have to do that you don't understand. You understand wine and literature and movies ... but you don't understand my plight."

The "plight" of Jack, played by Thomas Haden Church, is a pre-nuptial romp during a wine-tasting trip before his fateful wedding. But the story of Church's journey is not entirely different from Jack's.

Like the character he plays, Church is most famous for his work on older TV shows. He's probably most recognized as the guy who played Lowell, the deadpan mechanic in the NBC sitcom "Wings" (1990-97), before leaving to co-star opposite Debra Messing in the Fox series "Ned and Stacey" (1995-97).

But with "Wings" long behind him, Church is finally taking flight.

In Variety, Todd McCarthy wrote of Church: "Who ever expected the co-star of TV's 'Wings' and 'Ned and Stacey' to suddenly emerge as a riotous presence in a top indie-flavored picture?"

Nominated for a Golden Globe, Church has already been honored by the Los Angeles Film Critics Association for best supporting actor and appears a lock for an Academy Award nomination.

Praise for "Sideways" and others in its ensemble cast — Paul Giamatti, Virginia Madsen and Sandra Oh (director Alexander Payne's wife) — is just as loud. The film ranked in more than 50 critics' top 10 lists (including both Associated Press movie reviewers'). USA Today recently commented that based on the early season awards, "Sideways" is the odds-on favorite to win the best-picture Oscar.

While terms like "surprise" and "unlikely" get tossed around about both "Sideways" and its co-star, even Church, himself, was unimpressed.

He says he chose to do other things after the two TV series "because I had made enough money to be secure. I think in some way I was moving away from acting. By circumstance, you just kind of wave goodbye."

A Texas native, Church started out as a radio disc jockey

and voice-over announcer, a fitting occupation given his deep, animated voice. If pressed, he can still mock-anounce the taglines of a few old radio stations.

After catching the acting bug in an independent movie, Church moved to Los Angeles and in 1990 was cast on "Wings." Along with "Ned and Stacey," the actor co-starred in the two "George of the Jungle" movies, which he did to make a few good flicks for the kids and "for a chunk of change."

While mixing in less memorable appearances in films, Church wrote and directed his first movie, "Rolling Kansas," a comedy about a road trip in search of a marijuana forest. Made independently, it played at the 2003 Sundance Film Festival but was not picked up for theatrical distribution.

For the last few years, the 43-year-old has spent less time in Hollywood, living with his wife and children near their Texas cattle ranch.

Enter Payne. The director was impressed by Church in auditions for his last two films: "Election" and "About Schmidt." He was close for the part in "Schmidt," but lost out to Dermot Mulroney in the role of Kathy Bates' brother. For the character of Jack in "Sideways," Payne thought about casting a big-name actor but didn't think the audience would buy a movie star playing a C-lister.

"He says in the movie 'I used to be in a couple of TV series. I write right now. I do mostly commercials,'" says Payne. "That's kind of what Tom has been doing recently. Yes, he directed a movie, 'Rolling Kansas' and also did 'George of the Jungle,' but his big things have been those TV series. I think about it every time I see that scene."

So will "Sideways" propel Church back into acting full time?

"I've been offered several movies since Toronto [Film Festival] but I didn't want to do any of them. If this is the last thing, that would be all right. I have no problem with 'Sideways' as the movie I become known for."

Meantime, he makes a cameo in another movie in theaters now, "Spanglish."

The parallels between Church and Jack only go so far, though.

And Church certainly doesn't buy Jack's "plight" or that his womanizing will end when a ring is on his finger — "No leopard changes his spots in his early 40s."

Listerine ads leave bad taste in judge's mouth

Pfizer will be told to stop claiming mouthwash is as effective as dental floss

BY LARRY NEUMEISTER

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Mouthwash is no substitute for dental floss, a federal judge ruled, calling a Listerine ad campaign false and misleading and a public health risk.

Judge Denny Chin said in a written ruling made public Friday that he expected to order Pfizer Inc. as early as Monday to stop claiming that its product, Listerine, is as effective as floss at reducing plaque and gingivitis between teeth.

The ruling came after McNeil-PPC Inc., a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson, filed a lawsuit saying that false claims in the advertising campaign that began last June posed an unfair threat against its sales of dental floss.

"Dentists and hygienists have been telling their patients for decades to floss daily," Chin wrote. "They have been doing so for good reason. The benefits of flossing are real — they are not a 'myth.' Pfizer's implicit message that Listerine can replace floss is false and misleading."

Pfizer in print ads had featured a Listerine bottle balanced on a scale opposite a floss container. The ad said: "Listerine antiseptic is clinically proven to be as effective as floss at reducing plaque and gingivitis between the teeth."

The judge said "substantial evidence" demonstrates that flossing is important in reducing tooth decay and gum disease and that it cannot be replaced by rinsing with a mouthwash.

The judge also noted that the authors of articles on which Pfizer based its advertising campaign had emphasized that dental professionals should continue to recommend daily flossing and cautioned that they were not suggesting that mouth rinse be used instead of floss.

Chin said Pfizer based its findings on two flawed studies of people with mild to moderate gingivitis who did not use floss properly. The studies, he added, proved only that Listerine is "as effective as improperly used floss."

The judge noted that 87 percent of consumers floss either infrequently or not at all, despite frequent warnings from dentists and dental hygienists to do so.

The judge said Pfizer had received com-

plaints about its advertising, including one from a dental professional who said it was "aghast" to hear of the company's claims and another who said the claims "can set back years of progress by the ethical dental profession in convincing patients that flossing is essential for their oral health."

Chin wrote that flossing provides benefits that Listerine does not, including the ability to remove plaque below the gumline and to dislodge pieces of food trapped between teeth.

The judge said he found it "highly troubling" that Pfizer took the position in the lawsuit that floss can be replaced by Listerine even though it had told dental professionals for two years that it was not suggesting that was the case.

Messages left with Pfizer were not immediately returned.

Doctor's orders: 1 book per kid

The Associated Press

CLEVELAND — A doctor's concern that a hospital waiting room had nothing for children to read has turned into a program that gives away millions of books each year.

Dr. Robert Needleman, now a pediatrician at Cleveland's MetroHealth Medical Center, was working at a hospital in Boston's South End when he noticed the lack of reading material.

Workers told him they had been bringing books to the office from home but patients were stealing the books, so they gave up. That got Needleman thinking.

He made phone calls and wrote letters asking for help. Boston's historic Old South Church came through with \$6,000 — enough money to buy hundreds of books.

He gave one book to every child who came in for a checkup.

Today, thousands of doctors and nurses at more than 2,100 clinics and hospitals throughout the United States are giving away books. Doctors who have come to the United States to complete their medical training have taken the program around the world to Canada, Italy, Australia, Israel and Lithuania.

The program Needleman started is called Reach Out and Read.



The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer/AP

Volunteer reader Sonya Dean reads a book to Darion Polk, 3, left, and Ray/Quil Newton, 4, in the waiting room at the Women and Children's Pavilion at MetroHealth Medical Center in Cleveland in July 9. Dr. Robert Needleman, a pediatrician at the center, started giving free books to children and the practice blossomed into an international program called Reach Out and Read.

Last year, it celebrated its 15th anniversary and gave away more than 3 million books. By 2009, it hopes to double that.

Needleman, 45, who has been hired by Dr. Benjamin Spock's widow to update the classic "Dr. Spock's Baby and Child Care," heads the Cleveland chapter of Reach Out and Read.

Boy Scouts, college students and senior citizens volunteer to collect books, box them up and deliver them to the doctors and nurses who hand them out.

Sometimes publishers donate books, adding to the millions

Reach Out and Read buys every year.

Needleman has had the help of thousands of people, including first lady Laura Bush and Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton who have promoted the program.

Last year, the U.S. Department of Education gave Reach Out and Read \$4 million to buy books. This year, it will expand that to \$10 million.

"What Robert brought to this was his passion for children and his commitment to make a difference in their lives," says Barry Zuckerman, co-founder of Reach Out and Read.

.S. government aim: eliminate chicken pox

Doctors question need for second shot

BY SUSAN FITZGERALD

Knight Ridder Newspapers

PHILADELPHIA — Nearly a decade after a new chicken-pox vaccine began driving down the number of children getting the itchy red spots, the United States government has an even more ambitious goal: to eliminate the disease from this country.

But to help get there, it might mean giving children a second shot of the vaccine.

That would be good news for the vaccine's maker, Merck & Co. But some doctors wonder if it's worth the cost and effort of adding another shot in a crowded vaccination program.

A large government study in Philadelphia is helping health officials measure the effectiveness of the one-dose regimen and decide whether a second one should be added.

And a new combination vaccine for which Merck is seeking federal approval could make it easier to give a second dose. Combining protection into one shot represents the future of vaccines, experts say.

Health officials want chicken pox, which still afflicts about 600,000 children a year, to go the way of other illnesses such as measles and mumps that were once a routine part of childhood.

"We would like to try to eliminate varicella," the virus that causes chicken pox and shingles in older people, said Dr. Jane Seward, who heads the viral vaccine branch at the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "The basic goal of any program should be decreasing disease to the lowest extent possible if that's not an undue burden on society."

When introduced in 1995, the vaccine was not intended to wipe out chicken pox, but rather to reduce the disease's toll.

About 4 million people a year in

this country, predominantly children, used to get chicken pox, a highly infectious disease that spreads by direct contact or through airborne droplets from coughing and sneezing.

Most weathered the fever — and sometimes hundreds of blisters that scabbed over within a week — without much problem. But about 100 people died and 11,000 people were hospitalized annually with complications such as pneumonia and encephalitis, a potentially deadly brain inflammation.

Right now children receive a single dose of vaccine between the ages of 1 year and 18 months. But some children who get the shot still come down with chicken pox, though typically a mild case.

The vaccine has dramatically reduced the number of sick children, Seward said. "But can we do even better?" she asked. "Ten years into the program, it is acceptable for children to get 20 lesions and miss three or four days of school?"

CDC officials decided this fall to pursue the goal of eliminating chicken pox, Seward said, which would mean the "disease is not being continuously transmitted in the United States."

The CDC is studying whether a second shot would be cost effective, she said.

Another shot would not be added lightly because children already get up to 22 immunizations by the age of 2.

Money is another issue. The chicken pox vaccine used in this country, Merck's Varivax, has a wholesale price of \$65.09 a dose, though it usually sells for less.

Dr. Robert S. Baltimore, a Yale University pediatrician, said he does not think "there's been widespread buy-in yet" by doctors for a second dose.

"Obviously the company making the vaccine is interested in a second shot," he said. "Nobody is in a tremendous rush to make any kind of final decision."



EUROPEAN FORECAST

Benelux: Cloudy with rain showers and gusty winds. Highs in the upper 40s to lower 50s. Tuesday lows in the upper 40s.

Britain, Ireland: Cloudy with rain showers and gusty winds. Highs in the upper 50s. Tuesday lows in the upper 40s.

Croatia and Bosnia: Partly cloudy with fog overnight. Highs in the mid-40s. Tuesday lows in the mid-20s.

France: Mostly cloudy with isolated rain showers. Highs in the 50s. Tuesday lows in the upper 30s to lower 40s.

Northern Germany: Cloudy with rain showers and gusty winds. Highs in the mid-40s to mid 50s. Tuesday lows in the upper 30s to mid-40s.

Southern Germany: Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 40s to lower 50s. Tuesday lows in the 30s.

Hungary: Mostly cloudy. Highs in the upper 40s. Tuesday lows in the upper 20s.

Northern Italy: Mostly cloudy. Highs in the mid-40s. Tuesday lows in the upper 20s.

Southern Italy: Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 50s to mid 60s. Tuesday lows in the 40s.

Kosovo: Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 50s. Tuesday lows in the lower 30s.

Norway: Cloudy with isolated rain showers. Highs in the mid-40s to lower 50s. Tuesday lows in the 30s.

Portugal, Spain: Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 50s to lower 60s. Tuesday lows in the mid-20s to mid-40s.

Turkey: Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 50s to lower 60s. Tuesday lows in the mid to upper 30s.

For current weather watches, warnings, and 5-day forecasts go to the USAF Operational Weather Squadron home page at: <http://www.sembach.af.mil>
<http://www.public.sembach.af.mil>

SUN & MOON

	Today	Tomorrow
Sunrise (Baghdad)	7:07AM	7:07AM
Sunrise (Frankfurt)	8:22AM	8:21AM
Sunset (Baghdad)	5:14PM	5:15PM
Sunset (Frankfurt)	4:45PM	4:47PM

New moon
 First qtr
 Full moon
 Last qtr

AFRICA

Capetown	80	64	Mogadishu	88	75
Dakar	88	64	Nairobi	82	57
Freeport	88	73	Rabat	62	47
Kinshasa	88	73	Tripoli	62	47

THE WORLD

Amsterdam	51	40	Manila	86	73
Bahran	71	47	Mexico City	70	41
Beijing	32	12	Montreal	26	12
Bombay	82	68	Riyadh	82	68
Buenos Aires	73	61	Rio de Jan	89	75
Buenos Aires	73	61	Sao Paulo	89	75
Calcutta	82	68	Singapore	82	68
Chengdu	73	61	Tokyo	73	61
Chongqing	73	61			
Chongqing	73	61			

TODAY'S STATESIDE OUTLOOK

Alaska	51	40	Cleveland	42	34
Alaska	51	40	Colorado Springs	50	38
Alaska	51	40	Denver	50	38
Alaska	51	40	El Paso	69	44
Alaska	51	40	Fort Worth	72	51
Alaska	51	40	Grand Junction	42	34
Alaska	51	40	Green Bay	37	24
Alaska	51	40	Green Bay	37	24
Alaska	51	40	Green Bay	37	24
Alaska	51	40	Green Bay	37	24

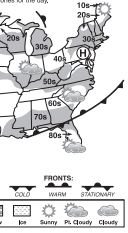
MIDEAST

Incirlik	51/37	Mazra-e-Sharif	44/29
Baghdad	58/37	Kabul	38/19
Tai Aviv	63/47	Islamabad	61/35
Cairo	67/49	New Delhi	69/44
Baghdad	58/37	Kabul	38/19
Tai Aviv	63/47	Islamabad	61/35
Cairo	67/49	New Delhi	69/44

THE UNITED STATES TODAY

San Antonio	77	62	Rain
San Diego	62	52	Rain
San Francisco	54	46	Rain
San Jose	65	44	Rain
San Juan	82	72	Rain
Seattle	44	36	Cloudy
Seattle	44	36	Cloudy
Seattle	44	36	Cloudy
Seattle	44	36	Cloudy
Seattle	44	36	Cloudy

As of noon, Eastern U.S. time



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Check our Relocation Guide every Saturday to find Realtors at your new station.

STARS AND STRIPES
Your Hometown Newspaper

Scheduled to **ETS** or **PCS**?

Horoscope

The new moon in Capricorn is about as pragmatic as it gets. Capricorn energy rules the sky now, and the fluffy niceties of life have never seemed more irrelevant. Small talk, flattery and frivolity of every kind will be sacrificed to get to the heart of the matter. This is how we proceed quickly toward our goal. It's the perfect day to start a new project.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (January 10). You thrill to see the culmination of your seemingly diverse talents this year — pull all your resources into one beautiful vision. A self-realization process is building through this month and next. New mentors and honest friends around you will be key. Love also has much to teach you through the spring, but you must ask for what you need.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You'll be judged by your conversation, so make sure it's "A"-level work. Being close to a gossip co-worker is socially dangerous — this person's negativity could drag you down into a spiteful whirlpool. Keep your high integrity.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Yes, you're attractive — wilyly so at times. But still, there are certain very unsexy aspects of your life that could use an update. Since internally, you're stepping into a sultry new role, your exterior world will change, too.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). The stars shed a light on those gems in your life — the people whose dedication and loyalty make you way easier. Show your gratitude by taking special care of these folks, and they will sparkle accordingly.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). By all accounts, you should have the same concerns that plagued you yesterday, but now, somehow they don't seem so dire. Everywhere you go, you leave a path of sunshine in your wake.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Why is it that your so-called "time off" is often more draining than your "time

on"? Perhaps you feel you must perform for certain loved ones. What you really need is to be alone with your inspiration — just you and your muse.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You could indulge on something ridiculous, like a gaudy chunk of "bling." What you really crave is respect. It's more valuable than rubies, more substantial than diamonds and more affordable than cubic zirconium.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). The crazies gravitate toward you. It's because you're the diplomatic leader, and they need you to show them how to get along. Some people's idea of compromise involves vanquishing the other.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You're bringing the best part of you to work. You're cheerful, and you give exuberance of yourself. Of course, you deserve a raise, but don't ask for it yet. Log in more brownie points first.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You keep thinking there's got to be a better way. Even if all you did today was brainstorm, you'd be ahead of the game. Generic ideas get a mediocre response. Radical ideas get a radical response.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). What is effortless to you takes a heck of a lot of effort for somebody else. And the opposite is also true. So find the specialist who can take an arduous task off of your to-do list. Otherwise, you waste time.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). In order to see magic around you, you have to first believe in it. There's no deep work to be done here — just make up your mind to think differently. Before you know it, you're enchanted by an otherworldly nymph.

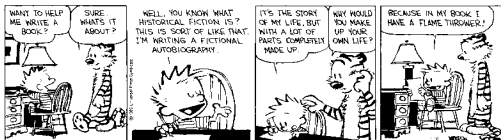
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You're organized and smart. But making more money on the job depends more on your sense of political timing. It boils down to putting others first — thinking of the problem from your boss' point of view.

Creators Syndicate

Holiday Mathis



Calvin and Hobbes



Jump Start



Zits



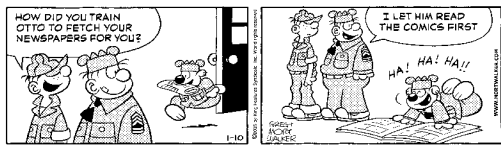
Cathy



Hi and Lois



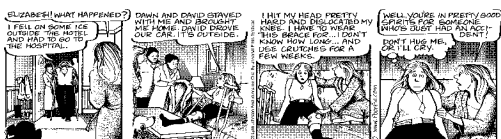
Beetle Bailey



Red and Rover



Better or Worse



Peanuts



Fotrot



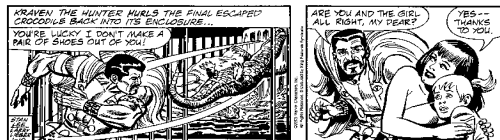
B.C.



Baby Blues



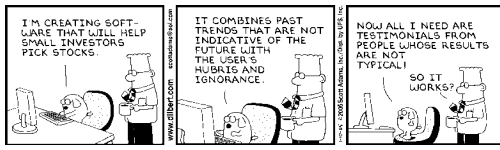
Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



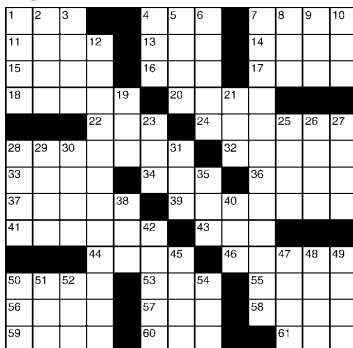
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 African slitherer
- 4 Charlotte's handwork
- 7 Festive
- 11 Bellow
- 13 Timetable abbr.
- 14 Lambs' dams
- 15 Gift-bearing trio
- 16 Addressee
- 17 Automaker
- 18 Mote
- 20 Cicatrix
- 22 Stashed
- 24 O'Neill or Ionesco
- 28 Resort area near Florida
- 32 Annette's "American Beauty" co-star
- 33 Winglike
- 34 Long March leader

Down

- 1 Weaponry
- 2 Daytime drama
- 3 Senate employee
- 4 Method
- 5 Cupid's counterpart
- 6 See 42-Down
- 7 Controversial comedian
- 8 Puncturing tool
- 9 Showed the way
- 10 Ninny
- 12 Controversial comedian
- 19 Kipling hero
- 21 Diving bird
- 23 TVA structure
- 25 Rock guitarist
- 26 Cardinals or Blue Jays
- 27 Oklahoma city
- 28 Hairless
- 29 Jai —
- 30 A Katzenjammer kid
- 31 Droop
- 35 Scepter topper
- 38 Witness
- 40 Lumox
- 42 With 6-Down, controversial comedian
- 45 Confront
- 47 Detail
- 48 House-paint shade
- 49 Not barefoot
- 50 Intimidate
- 51 Anger
- 52 Caddy contents
- 54 Acknowledge applause

Answer to Previous Puzzle



1-10

CRYPTOQUIP

S I C F S R X K T M E X X Z K C L
Z P Z Z D X T F S I L R T I F T W C P Z X.
M C S R T W W X K E S G G D

G X W C I R C W W S X U T U D.

Saturday's Cryptoquip: AT THE PUB, BECAUSE WE LIKE THE CLASSIC SONGWRITER, WE ALL DRANK A COLD PORTER.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: W equals L

Surgery should be individual choice

Dear Abby: My companion, "Sharon," and I are seniors and widowed. Sharon has an identical twin, "Karen." The sisters had scheduled some cosmetic surgery, noting major — just a "nip" here and a "tuck" there.

Now Karen has informed Sharon that because of some sudden and unexpected financial difficulties, she's unable to go ahead with the surgery.

Sharon now feels that she should cancel her surgery because she's afraid they will no longer look alike, and she feels it would be unfair to Karen.

I am neutral. I find Sharon beautiful as she is.

However, I know that she is very disappointed. What do you or your identical twin readers think should Sharon have the surgery?

— In Love With Sharon

Dear in Love: In the era in

which the companion was raised, identical twins were encouraged to accentuate their similarities. (Thankfully, that practice has changed in recent decades, and twins are now encouraged to develop as individuals.) If identical twinning is important to Sharon, she should not have the surgery. It could make her feel guilty, and her twin feel abandoned. She is wise to carefully consider all the ramifications.

Dear Abby



Dear Abby: Please help me handle this mess. I have two daughters, "Rina" and "Diana," who are both in their 20s.

Diana, my younger daughter, has two children. She's constantly trying to push her little girls onto me while she works. I love them, but my health isn't all that great.

If I turn Diana down, she accuses me of not being a good mother or grandma.

When Rina and Diana argue, they constantly try to put me in the middle. They get angry at me when I refuse to take sides. Please help me. I can't watch my grandkids seven days a week, and I'm sick of being forced to referee in my daughters' battles.

— Tired of Being a Pushover, Ridgeland, S.C.

Dear Pushover: Your health must come first. Unless you stand up for yourself, you'll get no respect from either of your daughters. You ARE a good mother — you raised the children you brought into this world. Now it's Diana's turn. Tell her plainly which days you are willing/able to watch your granddaughters and that she must make other arrangements the rest of the week. Do not waver and do not apologize. Because someone calls you a "bad mother" or "bad grandma" does not make you one.

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 6940, Los Angeles, CA 90069. Readers can write to Abby at the internet at <http://www.uspspress.com/dearabby>. Universal Press Syndicate

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

BOINS

--	--	--	--	--

HIWSS

--	--	--	--	--

TANNIE

--	--	--	--	--

GLUBIN

--	--	--	--	--

www.jumble.com

Print answer here:

_____ (Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's

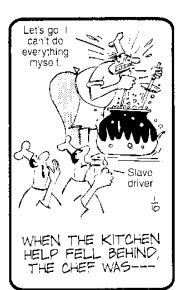
Jumbles:

JULEP PATIO BUSHEL TOUCHY

Answer:

How she felt when her cobble recipe won the blue ribbon — JUST "PEACHY"

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argrison



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Niece's lies soon will be revealed

Dear Annie: My brother's 9-year-old daughter, "Carrie," has a habit of exaggerating and stretching the truth. She's made up nasty rumors about members of our family several times. Carrie knows exactly what the sensitive topics are and how to strike a nerve. I've held my tongue before, but this time it's too much.

Carrie told her dad that my daughter pushed her on purpose and cursed at her. There were several other people present, and they all say nothing of the kind occurred. My daughter loves her cousin and would never hurt her.

My brother, of course, listened to Carrie, decided she was telling the truth and proceeded to confront my 12-year-old daughter without my knowledge. How can I convince my brother that his daughter is a liar?

— Anytown, USA

Dear Anytown: Don't try. Even if he believes you, he will defend his daughter and your efforts will

Annie's Mailbox



produce nothing but anger. In time, he will learn that her word is meaningless, but the damage will have been done. Meanwhile, make it clear that under no circumstances is he allowed to confront your daughter.

While many children tell small lies in order to get out of trouble or earn rewards, Carrie seems to do this for sport. A child who lies continually and viciously is shamed by everyone.

Dear Annie: Our 4-year-old daughter's name is Arielle, with the accent on the last syllable, but a lot of people rename her Ariel, with the accent on the first syllable, like "The Little Mermaid."

If we wanted her to be called Ariel, we would have named her that.

When I enrolled Arielle in preschool, I wrote the correct pronunciation on her registration card, but both teachers insist on

calling her Ariel. I corrected them, nicely, but they became very defensive and said the name was too unusual to remember.

As a result of this constant mispronunciation, the children in my daughter's class call her Ariel. Arielle is shy and won't correct them. Should I tell Arielle not to respond when someone calls her Ariel?

— Tired of The Little Mermaid

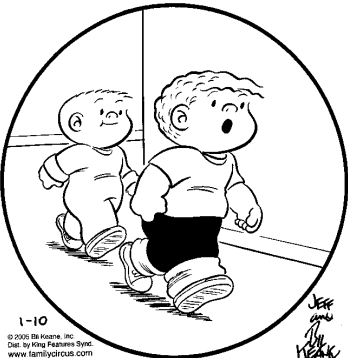
Dear Tired: Unusual names often are mispronounced by teachers, but there is no excuse for them to keep doing it after you have called it to their attention. Ask them once more, very politely, to call Arielle by her correct name. If they refuse, talk to the principal.

Keep in mind, this problem may occur every time Arielle has a new teacher, so show her how to correct someone politely.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to anniesmailbox@comcast.net, or write to Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

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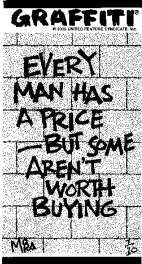
Family Circus



I-10

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www.familycircus.com

"PJ's following me, but I'm not going anywhere."



Dennis the Menace



© Gary Larson

The Far Side



Non Sequitur



Mavericks score on Pacers' 11th straight loss

BY JAIMIE ARON

The Associated Press

DALLAS — The Dallas Mavericks were waiting to find out whether their recent offensive roll was for real. Even after playing the Indiana Pacers, they're still waiting.

The Mavs made a franchise-best 74.3 percent of their shots in the first half, then cruised to a 121-101 victory over the Indiana Pacers on Saturday night. Dirk Nowitzki led the way with 34 points and 13 rebounds and Michael Finley added a season-high 33.

This game was so lopsided so quickly that it probably took more about Indiana than it did about Dallas. Still, the Mavericks were quite impressive in making 26 of 35 shots in the first two quarters. They

scored 77 first-half points against a team that's allowed 77 or less in two full games this season.

"I'm kind of surprised we were able to do that," Dallas coach Don Nelson said. "Sometimes it's not the shots you make but the shots you get. Well, we took higher-percentage shots for us and made them, and some of the contested shots we made, too."

The Mavs have won five straight, their longest streak of the season, and they're 7-1 since Jason Terry became the starting point guard. They're averaging more than 110 points per game in that span and have hit 120 three times. All seven wins have been by at least 14 points.

Nowitzki, however, was among those questioning the legitimacy of those numbers because they came against teams at or below .500.

While the Pacers (16-15) are in that category, they were considered the best test yet because of the team's recent win, well they've been playing since Jermaine O'Neal returned from a suspension.

Instead, Indiana showed how badly it misses Ron Artest, last year's defensive player of the year who is suspended the rest of this season for his role in the brawl with Detroit fans.

"We're not at full strength, but we still have enough to play at a high level," said O'Neal, who scored 32. "They got out and played extremely well in the transition game. I don't take anything away from them. They have a lot of talented players."

The jump-shooting Mavericks scored on 24 of their first 30 possessions, including nine straight. That ended with Nowitzki

making a four-point play that gave Dallas a 23-point lead with 8:33 left in the first half.

But the Pacers "weren't there at all," guard Reggie Miller said.

The Pacers ended up allowing their most points since a 122-111 loss to Memphis on March 7, 2003. They lost for the second straight time after winning a game in row and fell to 3-8 against the West after going an East-best 28-8 against the conference last season.

The Pacers' last shot up their defense quickly because two of their next three games are against the Suns, the league's highest-scoring team, starting Sunday night in Phoenix.

"We have a chance to get this out of our system and play a better game," coach Rick Carlisle said. "We don't have a lot of time to spend this loss."

Arenas lifts Wizards to 29th straight win

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Gilbert Arenas scored seven of his season-high 40 points in the first 2:19 to lead the Washington Wizards to their fourth consecutive victory, 117-114 over the Minnesota Timberwolves on Saturday night.

Larry Hughes had 28 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists for the Wizards, and who at 19-13 are off to their best start in 20 seasons. Antawn Jamison added 23 points and 10 rebounds for Washington.

Kevin Garnett, who finished with 25 points and 19 rebounds, scored 12 in the fourth quarter to give the Timberwolves a 112-106 lead on a turnaround jumper with 2:02 remaining. But the Timberwolves couldn't close out the Wizards and lost their seventh consecutive road game.

The Wizards pulled to 114-113 on Arenas' three-pointer and two free throws by Jamison with 1:12 left.

Arenas made two free throws that gave Washington a 115-114 lead with 27.4 seconds left.

Cavaliers 104, Knicks 79: LeBron James hit his first eight shots and scored 22 points to power Cleveland to its third straight victory.

James, in his fifth game wearing a clear mask to protect a broken left cheekbone, played only 32 minutes and shot 10-of-14 from the field.

Lucious Harris scored a season-high 16 points as Cleveland pulled away in double digits and improved to 13-5 at home, 20-12 overall.

Tim Thomas scored 17 points for New York, which dropped to 5-10 (16-17) with its fourth consecutive loss.

Spurs 99, Nuggets 90: In San Antonio, Bruce Bowen beat Carmelo Anthony in check and made three three-pointers in the fourth quarter to help the Spurs hand Denver its ninth loss in 10 games.

Anthony, who entered the game averaging a team-leading 21.7 points, was limited to eight points on 4-for-11 shooting. He sat out most of the third quarter with foul trouble while the Nuggets grabbed to pull to 72-68.

Roundup

Mamu Gbinoili scored 22 points for San Antonio, while Tony Parker had 20 and Tim Duncan 19.

Magic 104, Nets 101: In Orlando, J.J. Van Gundy hit scored 22 points, and the Magic won their third straight by holding off New Jersey's frantic comeback.

The Nets had won 19 early in the fourth quarter, cut the deficit to two with 10 seconds remaining on Jason Kidd's fourth three-pointer of the period. Kidd had 22 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists for his first triple-double of the season and 60th of his career.

After the Nets fouled, Cuttino Mobley's free throws put the Magic back up by four. He made six foul shots in the final 20 seconds to finish with 16 points.

Hornets 121, Kings 117 (OT): Baron Davis had his first triple-double in more than two seasons, helping the Hornets end their 10-game losing streak with an overtime victory over visiting Sacramento.

Davis scored 26 points, tied a career high with 17 assists and grabbed 10th rebound in overtime to ice the Hornets' third win of the season.

Bulls 102, Celtics 91: In Chicago, Kirk Hinrich scored 22 points and tied a career high with 14 assists to lead the Bulls to their ninth win in 12 games.

Othella Harrington, in a rare start, matched a season high with 19 points on 9-for-12 shooting and grabbed a season-high 10 rebounds for the Bulls, who surged ahead with a 13-0 third-quarter run.

Suns 108, Clippers 91: Joe Johnson scored 25 points and Phoenix matched its victory total for last season after just 33 games with a rout of the Clippers.

Shawn Marion had 22 points and 11 rebounds for the visiting Suns, who have won five straight and 25 of 27. They lead the league with a 29-1 record, the best start in franchise's 37-year history.

Last season Phoenix went 29-53, its third-worst record.

NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
New York	19	11	63.3	
Philadelphia	15	27	35.7	4 1/2
Boston	13	29	31.0	6 1/2
New Jersey	12	34	26.1	8 1/2
Orlando	10	36	21.7	10 1/2
Southeast Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Miami	19	13	59.4	
Washington	18	14	56.3	
Charlotte	13	29	31.0	4 1/2
Atlanta	10	36	21.7	7 1/2
Central Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Cleveland	20	12	62.5	
Portland	17	15	53.1	
Indiana	16	16	50.0	
Chicago	13	19	40.5	3 1/2
Milwaukee	12	28	33.7	7 1/2

Western Conference

Southwest Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	14	7	66.7	
Phoenix	12	10	54.5	
Houston	11	17	46.3	1 1/2
New Orleans	10	18	35.7	2 1/2
Northwest Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Seattle	19	12	61.3	
Minnesota	17	15	53.1	
Denver	14	18	43.8	3 1/2
Utah	14	18	43.8	3 1/2
Pacific Division				
W	L	Pct	GB	
Golden State	21	11	65.6	
Lakers	17	15	53.1	
Sacramento	13	19	40.5	3 1/2
Golden State	11	23	32.3	7 1/2

Saturday's games

W	L	Pct	GB	
Cleveland	104	106	91	
San Antonio	99	104	91	
Orlando	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Sunday's games

W	L	Pct	GB	
Portland	104	106	91	
New York	104	106	91	
Phoenix	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Tuesday's games

W	L	Pct	GB	
Charlotte	104	106	91	
Portland	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Saturday

Cavaliers 104, Knicks 79

W	L	Pct	GB	
New York	104	106	91	
Cleveland	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Sunday

Cavaliers 104, Knicks 79

W	L	Pct	GB	
New York	104	106	91	
Cleveland	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Spurs 99, Nuggets 90

W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Saturday

W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Sunday

W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Saturday

W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Sunday

W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Saturday

W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Sunday

W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Saturday

W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Sunday

W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Hornets 121, Kings 117 (OT)

W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Saturday

W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Sunday

W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Saturday

W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Sunday

W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Saturday

W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Sunday

W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Saturday

W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Sunday

W	L	Pct	GB	
San Antonio	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	
Golden State	104	106	91	

Singh hangs on as showdown looms in Maui

BY DOUG FERGUSON

The Associated Press

KAPALUA, Maui — Vijay Singh heard cheers at every corner Saturday in the Mercedes Championships, and all he could muster were mostly pars. He finally answered with one shot that salvaged the day.

Singh hit a 5-wood from 248 yards within 10 feet on the par-5 15th for an eagle, allowing him to shoot a 4-under 69 and hold off Jonathan Kaye and Ernie Els heading into the final round of the season-opening tournament.

"It came out absolutely perfect," Singh said. "I couldn't hit it any better."

He was at 19-under 200, in good shape to become the first wire-to-wire winner of the winners-only Mercedes Championships since it moved to Kapalua in 1999.

Kaye birdied six of his final eight holes for a 66 and was at 201, while Els finally got out of a funk from a bad bogey at No. 9 to shoot a 68, leaving him two shots behind.

Still, it all comes down to Singh. Coming off a nine-win season, the 41-year-old Fijian can make an early statement about his No. 1 ranking with a victory Sunday in what is expected to be wet, windy weather. Singh has won the last 11 times when he has had at least a share of the 54-hole lead, dating to the 2001 MCI Classic.

"He's on a roll like probably only two or three guys in history have ever been on," said Stewart Cink, who shot a 67 and was three strokes behind. "He's going to be tough to catch. I don't even know what he is (under par) right now, but I'm sure we can wait five minutes and it will be one better."



Tiger Woods tees off from the third tee box during the third round of the Mercedes Championships on Saturday at the Kapalua Plantation Course in Kapalua, Hawaii. Woods was five strokes behind leader Vijay Singh.

Not quite.

Singh had 15 pars — his other two holes were a simple up-and-down birdie on No. 9 and a wedge to 2 feet on No. 6 — and realized he was doing a good chance to expand his lead.

"It's a disappointing 4 under, but I'll take it," he said. "I'm still in the lead."

Tiger Woods threw three shots away late in his round — a 2-iron into the waist-high weeds on No. 15 that he never found, and a driver off the 17th hole that went 370 yards, through the fairway, the rough and into the hazard.

"The book says it's 370 yards to the hazard," Woods said. "I didn't think I could hit it that far."

He wound up with a 69 and was five shots behind.

Defending champion Stuart Appleby, who opened with a 74, got into the hunt with rounds of 64-66

and was four shots behind along with Mike Weir (71).

It was shaping up to a dynamic conclusion along the rugged coast of Maui, and an intriguing start to the year.

Six players were within five shots of Singh on a course where, as the third round proved, anyone can get it going and one hole can change things in a hurry.

But there is a change in the wind.

A spectacular day on Maui is expected to give way to heavy rain and Kona wind from the opposite direction, making the Poinsettia play its toughest. Starting times were moved up some five hours for the final round.

"Quite a few guys can come into it," Els said. "I'm happy to be in the final group."

Kaye played with Singh in the opening round, with Woods on Fri-

day and spent the third round with Els, a good chance for him to see how his game stacks up to the Big Three.

"It's stacking up all right," Kaye said.

He finished with a flurry, starting with an 8-foot birdie putt on No. 11 and making all of his closing birdies from inside that range. Kaye is the only player among the top seven ranked out of the top 15, but he looks as though he's capable of winning at Kapalua.

"It would be great to this opener," he said. "You could take the rest of the year off."

Els wasn't the least bit daunted seeing Singh atop the leaderboard through two rounds, and he showed why. He started out with a couple of 20-foot birdie putts, then stuffed a wedge inside 4 feet on the third for his third straight birdie to the Singh.

And when the Big Easy two-putted for birdie on the par-5 fifth — with Singh making nothing but pars behind him — Els had the lead to himself and was cruising right along.

But all that work came undone on one hole.

He pulled his approach into an awkward lie in the bunker on the par-5 ninth and took two shots to get out, making bogey on one of the easiest holes at Kapalua. That was like giving two shots to the field, and Singh came through with a chip to 4 feet for birdie to restore his two-stroke margin.

"Believe me, any time you make a 6 on a par 5, it gets you," Els said. "I don't care who you are."

Woods, meanwhile, had a meltdown after more putting problems. He missed from 10 feet on No. 3 and cursed, from 8 feet on No. 4 and pursed his lips, then missed matters with a three-putt par from 35 feet on the fifth. When his 10-foot birdie on the next hole turned away, Woods came undone.

Holding his putter by its head, he took a full swing into the side of his bag — forward, then backward. He ripped off the cover of his driver and threw that to the ground. And after a big tee shot, he smacked his driver into the cart path.

But he managed to stay close to the leaders until his two mistakes at the end.

And that's one thing that has set Singh apart this week. He isn't making every putt, but he isn't making any mistakes. The only player without a bogey at Kapalua this week, Singh needs only one more round — likely in wet conditions — to start the new year like nothing ever changed.

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Moya donates India winnings to tsunami aid

The Associated Press

MADRAS, India — Top-seeded Carlos Moya of Spain retained the ATP Tour's Chennai Open title by defeating Paradorn Srichaphan of Thailand 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (5) on Sunday in a repeat of last year's final.

World fifth-ranked Moya, 28, became the first player to successfully defend the title since the tournament's inception in 1996.

Moya, the 1998 French Open champion, rallied from the brink of defeat at 2-5 in the deciding third set as he broke Paradorn twice and then clinched the title through a tiebreaker for the second consecutive year.

"I was extremely lucky to win today — Never in my previous 17 title victories did I feature in a final where I came back from 2-5 in the decider set," said Moya, who later donated the winner's purse of \$52,000 toward the relief operation for victims of the Dec. 26 tsunami that claimed more than 150,000 lives.

One of the three season-launching tournaments, the Chennai Open kept its date with the ATP Tour even though the tsunami killed several hundred people along the city's coastline.

"I'm donating the entire prize money from this tournament for tsunami victims, hoping it

makes some difference to their lives," Moya said.

Johansson wins Australian tuneup

ADELAIDE, Australia — Joachim Johansson won his second career title when he beat American Taylor Dent 7-5, 6-3 on Sunday in the final of the Australian men's hard-court championships.

U.S. awarded Olympic equestrian gold

LONDON — Germany's Olympic team show jumping gold medal will go to the United States after the International Equestrian Federation announced it had disqualified rider Ludger Beerbaum and horse Goldfever for a doping offense.

"It's very exciting for us. It's an unfortunate thing for the sport, but it's nice for the Americans. It's exciting to win the gold medal, not in the traditional way, but it's still a gold medal," U.S. team member McLain Ward said.

Now Sweden will be awarded the silver, and Germany will drop to the bronze because the sport's governing body erased Goldfever's results from the Athens event.

"The Judicial Committee has agreed that the horse, Goldfever, and (Beerbaum) must be disqualified from the event and that all prizes and prize money won at the event must be forfeited," the FEI said in a statement on its Web site.

The rider — who has denied cheating — said the banned steroid betamethasone was contained in an ointment used to treat a skin irritation on the horse.

American Koznick second in Cup slalom

SANTA CATERINA VALFURVA, Italy — Marlies Schild of Austria won a slalom Sunday for her third World Cup victory this season while Kristina Koznick was runner-up for her second top-three result this season.

Schild covered the two runs on the new Debora Compagnoni course in 1 minute, 29.96 seconds, moving from third after the first run. Koznick, the first-run leader, was 0.15 seconds behind.

Germany's Monika Bergmann-Schmuderer was third, 0.24 back.

Miller fails to finish World Cup race

CHAMONIX, France — Italy's Giorgio Rocca won his second straight slalom Sunday, easily capturing a race in which overall World Cup leader Bode Miller failed to finish the first leg.

He had a combined time of 1 minute, 28.15 seconds — 1.33 seconds ahead of runner-up Benjamin Raich of Austria. Markus Larsson of Sweden, 14th after the opening leg, finished third in 1:29.51.

Miller has finished only one World Cup slalom this season.

Houston runs out of time for Beltran

Mets trying to make deal with All-Star center fielder

BY JOEL ANDERSON

The Associated Press

HOUSTON — Carlos Beltran's stay in Houston almost certainly will be short.

The Astros failed to reach an agreement with the All-Star center fielder before an 11 p.m. CST Saturday deadline, and Beltran is all but certain to leave the team he helped come within a win of its first World Series appearance.

Under the rules of baseball's labor contract, Houston cannot sign Beltran until May 1 — virtually assuming he'll go to another team. The Astros had been bidding for Beltran against the New York Mets and perhaps other teams.

Beltran and agent Scott Boras made the Astros sweat this one out. Houston General Manager Tim Lincecum had said that Houston made its final offer to Beltran on Thursday. Boras has been seeking more than \$100 million.

"Scott called us to let us know they were going to go in a different direction," Purpura said. "I don't know if that's the right word, certainly disappointed."

Boras was trying to finalize a contract with the Mets early Sunday. The sides kept on talking after the deadline passed, trying to reach an agreement on timing.

There was no immediate comment from the Mets.

Over the past few months, the New York Yankees, Chicago Cubs and Detroit Tigers also were thought to be pursuing Beltran.

Regardless, the courtship of Beltran will be a bitter-sweet memory for the Astros.

He came to Houston in a mid-season trade from Kansas City, with the Astros hoping he'd provide a spark for a team that was clearly underachieving. Beltran did his part, but the Astros continued to stumble well into the summer, raising speculation that he'd be traded again.

Houston kept him and was glad it did. He was a big reason the Astros finished 36-10 and made the playoffs.

Beltran then sent his price soaring during a remarkable postseason run with the Astros, batting .417 in the NL championship series with four home runs, five RBIs and four steals. He also hit .455 with four homers and nine RBIs in the first round.

Since the Astros' season ended in Game 7 of the NLCS in St. Louis, Houston officials had little contact with Beltran.

During negotiations, Purpura said the Astros talked with Beltran once. That was during a Dec. 22 meeting in the team's spring training camp in Kissimmee, Fla.

And as the deadline approached Saturday, Purpura said the Astros and Boras didn't really discuss specifics of the offer until late in the afternoon.

"The serious part of this only happened in the last six hours," Purpura said. "Really, I think we ran out of time."

Mostly, it's time and distance. Certainly I regarded the fact that we didn't deal with some of these things earlier — but we didn't control the pace of the negotiations."

Without Beltran and the loss of All-Star second baseman Jeff Kent to the Dodgers, the Astros will have a hard time pursuing Roger Clemens not to retire.

Clemens, 42, has said he would make a decision in January whether to retire or play. The Rocket intended to quit after the 2003 season, then changed his mind and signed with his hometown team, winning the Cy Young Award for a record seventh time.

"Certainly we will welcome Roger back," Purpura said. "We're not going to shift into a rebuilding mode because of this."

Purpura said the candidates to replace Beltran in center field were most likely be Jason Lane, minor-league prospect Willy Taveras or Craig Biggio, who held the position before Beltran joined the team.

He also said Houston had not ruled out a trade to upgrade the spot.

While talking with Beltran, the Mets agreed to a one-year contract with South Korean left-hander Dae Sung Koo, who pitched in the 2000 Olympics and spent the last four years with the Orix Blue Wave in Japan's Pacific League.

"I'm excited about the chance to pitch in the major leagues," Koo said in a statement. "It's been my dream to face the highest level of competition possible. I'm thankful to get this opportunity."

Among players eligible for salary arbitration, Texas catcher Rod Barajas agreed to a \$1.85 million, one-year deal.

Pitcher Pedro Astacio (Boston) and catcher Brent Mayne (Los Angeles) also let the deadline pass.

Mayne indicated previously he probably would retire if the Dodgers didn't sign him.

David McCarty beat Saturday night's deadline to stay with the Boston Red Sox, agreeing to a minor league contract that would pay him a \$500,000 salary if he is added to the major league roster.

McCarty, a first baseman and outfielder, hit .258 with four home runs and 17 RBIs in 91 games last season. He played first base in 67 games and in the outfield in 17 games.



Rams tight end Cameron Cleeland makes his only catch of the day for the winning touchdown in Seattle.

Rams: St. Louis rolling at right time

RAMS, FROM BACK PAGE

And this one stings a little more because the NFC West rival Rams became the first 8-8 team in NFL history to win in the playoffs.

"One of these years, we're going to win a playoff game and take that next step," said coach Mike Holmgren, who is 0-3 in the playoffs in six seasons with Seattle, which has lost six playoff games going back to that last win. "It will happen if we keep the team together."

The Rams, who will travel to Philadelphia or Atlanta for next week's divisional round, beat Seattle in all three meetings this season, twice in Seattle. Their only other road win this year was at San Francisco, which finished 2-14, the NFL's worst record.

But they're heating up at the right time.

They won their final two games

to reach the playoffs, with Bulger throwing for a season-high 450 yards and three TDs in last week-end's 32-29 overtime defeat of the New York Jets.

"Maybe it's just knowing our butts are on the line. You've got to play well or you're going home," guard Adam Timmerman said. "It's unfortunate it took that urgency for us to get things done, but we're playing our best ball right now."

Jeff Wilkins tied it at 20 on a 27-yard field goal with 8:07 to play. The defense forced a punt, then Bulger got busy. He led a seven-play, 76-yard drive, throwing twice on the decisive drive to receivers who hadn't caught a pass all day.

First came a 31-yard gain on third-and-2 on a swing pass to Shaun McDonald — his first catch — then Bulger found Kevin Curtis for another 13 yards.

Cleeland's TD was his first catch of the day, too.

"I was waiting," Cleeland said. "I had a couple plays where Marc got sacked and didn't have a chance to get it to me. I was just waiting for my number to get called, and I made the play. It was a simple seam route."

Bulger completed 18 of 32 attempts with one interception, but it was his leadership and calm demeanor that meant just as much to the Rams.

"If you want someone in the foxhole when it counts, somebody to take that last shot at the buzzer, you want it to be Mark," coach Mike Martz said. "That's his personality. That's one of the things that makes him different."

Torry Holt caught six passes for 108 yards and one score, and Curtis had four receptions for 107 yards receiving.

Hasselbeck finished 27-for-43 for 341 yards passing with two TDs and one interception.

Manning, McNabb named Pro Bowl starters

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Peyton Manning will start at quarterback for the AFC, and Donovan McNabb will be the NFC's starting signal caller in next month's Pro Bowl.

The starters for the game, to be played in Honolulu on Feb. 13, were announced Saturday.

Manning will be joined in the AFC lineup by his Indianapolis Colts teammate Edgerrin James at running back; Tony Richardson of Kansas City at fullback; Marvin Harrison of the Colts and Chad Johnson of Cincinnati at wide receiver; Antonio Gates of San Diego at tight end; Willie Roaf of Kansas City and Jonathan Ogden of Baltimore at tackle;

Alan Faneca of Pittsburgh and Will Shields of the Chiefs at guard; and Kevin Mawae of the New York Jets at center.

The starters on defense for the AFC are John Abraham of the Jets and Dwight Freeney of the Colts at end; Richard Seymour of New England and Marcus Stroud of Jacksonville at tackle; Takeo Spikes of Buffalo and Terrell Suggs and Ray Lewis of Baltimore at linebacker; Champ Bailey of Denver and the Ravens' Chris McClellan at cornerback; and Baltimore's Ed Reed and Denver's John Lynch at safety.

McNabb will be joined on the NFC offense by running back Shaun Alexander of Seattle; fullback William Henderson of

Green Bay; tight end Alge Crumpler of Atlanta; wide receivers Muhsin Muhammad of Carolina and Terrell Owens of the Eagles; tackles Walter Jones of Seattle and Orlando Pace of St. Louis; guards Larry Allen of Dallas and Marco Rivera of Green Bay; and center Olin Kreutz of Chicago.

The NFC defense has Arizona's Bertrand Berry and Carolina's Julius Peppers at end; LaRoi Glover of Dallas and Kevin Williams of Minnesota at tackle; linebackers Keith Brooking of Atlanta, Derrick Brooks of Tampa Bay and Dan Morgan of Carolina; cornerbacks Lou Sheppard of the Eagles and Ronde Barber of Tampa Bay; and safeties Michael Lewis and Brian Dawkins of Philadelphia.

NFL Scoreboard

Playoff glance

Wild-Card playoffs
Saturday, Jan. 8
 N.Y. Jets 20, San Diego 17, OT
 Seattle 27, Oakland 20
 Denver at Indianapolis
 Minnesota at Green Bay

Divisional playoffs
Sunday, Jan. 9
 N.Y. Jets at Denver at Pittsburgh
 Green Bay, Oakland at Pittsburgh
 Seattle at Baltimore
 Indianapolis at N.Y. Jets at New England

Saturday

Rams 27, Seahawks 20

St. Louis 27, Seattle 20

Seattle 11-13 pass from Brett Favre (7-10)

Kick: Holt

Sea-FG Brown 07, 20

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OT: Chargers' miss leads to Jets' win

OT, FROM BACK PAGE

But the Chargers forced overtime when All-Pro tight end Antonio Gates caught a 1-yard touchdown pass from Pro Bowler Drew Brees to tie it at 17 with 11 seconds left in regulation.

It came one play after Jets linebacker Eric Barton was whistled for a personal foul for hitting Brees on the helmet with his right forearm after Brees threw a desperation pass on fourth-and-goal that was batted down in the end zone.

As Brien kicked the winning field goal, Barton sighed in relief. "I needed guys to dig me out of this and they did," Barton said.

Brien's winning kick came minutes after Kaeing's fumble.

"I don't know what happened," Kaeing said. "I let my teammates and my coaches down and I wasn't able to look them in the eye when I came back in the locker room knowing that I didn't do my job."

Pennington, who's led the Jets to three straight wins in San Diego game to 2002, was 23-31 for 279 yards. Brees was 31-for-42 for 319 yards.

Pennington threw a go-ahead, 47-yard touchdown pass to Moss early in the third quarter.

His second TD pass of the night went at least 55 yards in the air, and Moss caught it 2 yards deep in the end zone after getting behind safety Jerry Wilson and cornerback Quentin Jammer. That score gave the Jets a 14-7 lead.

The Jets ended a five-game road playoff losing streak. The last time they won away from home was Jan. 15, 1983, when they beat the Los Angeles Raiders 17-14.

The Jets got into the playoffs only because Buffalo lost to Pittsburgh last weekend.

"People doubted everything about us but we came out and we proved people wrong," tackle Kareem McKenzie said.

The Chargers were undisciplined, including their coach.

Schottenheimer was flagged for unsportsmanlike conduct for running onto the field after punter Mike Scifano took a dive in the second quarter.

The 15-yard penalty gave the Jets the ball on the San Diego 37, and Pennington threw a wide-open tight end Anthony Becht on a 13-yard touchdown pass five plays later that allowed the Jets to

NFL playoff overtimes

Jan. 8, 2005—New York Jets 20, San Diego Chargers 17 (AFC Wild Card), 14:50.

Jan. 12, 2004—Philadelphia Eagles 20, Green Bay Packers 17 (NFC Div. 1), 14:50.

Jan. 10, 2004—Carolina Panthers 25, Seattle Seahawks 23 (NFC Div. 1), 14:50.

Jan. 4, 2004—Green Bay Packers 23, San Diego Chargers 17 (AFC Wild Card), 16:35.

Jan. 11, 2003—Tennessee Titans 24, Pittsburgh Steelers 31 (AFC Div. 1), 16:35.

Jan. 15, 2002—New England Patriots 19, Oakland Raiders 21 (AFC Div. 1), 16:35.

Dec. 28, 2000—Miami Dolphins 23, Indianapolis Colts 17 (AFC Wild Card), 13:24.

Dec. 28, 1999—Miami Dolphins 23, Minnesota Vikings 27 (NFC Championship), 14:50.

Jan. 8, 1994—Kansas City Chiefs 27, Pittsburgh Steelers 24 (AFC Wild Card), 11:03.

Jan. 3, 1993—Buffalo Bills 41, Houston Oilers 38 (AFC Wild Card), 3:06.

Jan. 2, 1990—Atlanta Falcons 29, New York Giants 13 (NFC Div. 1), 15:00.

Dec. 31, 1989—Pittsburgh Steelers 26, Houston Oilers 23 (AFC Div. 1), 15:00.

Jan. 1, 1988—Houston Oilers 23, Seattle Seahawks 20 (AFC Div. 1), 15:00.

Jan. 11, 1987—Denver Broncos 23, Oakland Raiders 20 (AFC Championship), 5:38.

Jan. 7, 1987—Cleveland Browns 23, New York Jets 10 (AFC Div. 1), 15:00.

Jan. 2, 1982—San Diego Chargers 41, Miami Dolphins 38 (AFC Div. 1), 15:00.

Dec. 24, 1977—Oakland Raiders 37, Baltimore Colts 17 (AFC Div. 1), 15:00.

Dec. 24, 1977—Dallas Texans 20, Houston Oilers 17 (AFC Championship), 17:54.

Dec. 24, 1977—Dallas Texans 20, New York Giants 17 (NFL Championship), 8:15.

Dec. 26, 1965—Green Bay Packers 13, Baltimore Colts 10 (NFL Western Conference Playoff), 13:35.

Dec. 26, 1965—Dallas Texans 20, Houston Oilers 17 (AFC Championship), 17:54.

Dec. 24, 1977—Dallas Texans 20, New York Giants 17 (NFL Championship), 8:15.

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Jets linebacker Eric Barton (50) was called for roughing the passer for hitting Chargers quarterback Drew Brees after Brees released a pass in the fourth quarter. The penalty allowed San Diego to tie the game.

Barton let off hook for 'stupid' penalty

BY ANDREA ADELSON

The Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — Eric Barton really did breathe a sigh of relief, thanks to his teammates.

San Diego offensive coordinator Mike Scifano engineered a marvelous game-winning drive after the San Diego Chargers missed a field goal that would have won it, vaulting the Jets to a 20-17 overtime victory in the wild-card game Saturday night.

What a thrilling way for the Jets to show they deserved to be in the postseason — and for Barton to get redeemed.

Barton, a free-agent pickup from Oakland, was flagged for roughing the passer after Drew Brees threw incomplete on fourth down with 16 seconds left in regulation. Instead of ending the game, San Diego got a fresh set of downs, and Drew Brees threw a 19-yard touchdown pass to Antonio Gates to send the game into overtime.

Before the Jets got their first possession in the extra period, Barton went up to Pennington and said, "I need you to get me out of this." He almost failed Barton. The Chargers looked as though they would win, but Nate Kaeding missed a 40-yard field goal wide right.

"I was praying to God he missed it," Barton said.

When the Jets got their second chance, Pennington took advantage. He threw two completions, and LaMont Jordan had a big 19-yard run to put the Jets in field goal range.

Barton deeply exhaled and pointed to the sky after Doug Brien's winning field goal and received hugs from his jubilant teammates.

Not only did the Jets pull off the upset, they won a playoff road game for the first time since 1953. In 1953, when Richard Todd led a 17-14 upset of the Los Angeles Raiders.

"It was a stupid play, and I was wrong," Barton said. "If we hadn't won, I would have taken full responsibility."

Pennington never blamed his teammate.

"I don't fault Eric Barton, we voted him the most inspirational player on this team," Pennington said. "Every down and every game he plays like it's his last."

That was one play where his aggressiveness backfired. "All week, the Jets had to listen to their doubters talk about how the team backed into the playoffs. New York ended the regular-season with losses in three of their last four games. But coach Herman Edwards wanted his club to show it belonged in the postseason."

Now, the Jets move on to play another road game against Pittsburgh or New England, teams they went 0-3 against earlier this season.

Edwards showed a little more fire than usual on the sideline, when he nearly came to blows with running backs coach Bishop Harris. Though Edwards declined to specify why they were arguing, at the time of the fight Jordan was in the game instead of NFL rushing champion Curtis Martin.

Fullback Jerald Sovell had to restrain the two. After walking away, Harris said something else and Edwards turned back toward his assistant.

"That's family emotions coming out in a playoff game, and that's good," Edwards said. "He's a heck of a football coach, that was an incident, it's over with, and we're fine."

Pennington, playing with a sore right foot, proved he could win a big game after several poor recent performances. He also made his best throw since before he got hurt against Buffalo in November, when he threw a beautiful 47-yard touchdown pass to Santana Moss.

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SPORTS



Tar Heels make it look easy
against overwhelmed Terps,
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Visiting teams win wild ones

Rams escape Seattle, add to Seahawks' playoff pain

BY TIM KORTE
The Associated Press

SEATTLE — Matt Hasselbeck waited all season to redeem himself for what happened in last season's playoffs at Green Bay.

One year later, the outcome was painfully similar.

Marc Bulger threw for 313 yards and two touchdowns, the last a 17-yarder to Cam Cleeland with 2:11 to play Saturday, leading the Rams to a 27-20 win over Seattle and making St. Louis the first team without a winning record to advance in the playoffs.

"We know we're a good team," Bulger said. "We have talent, but we've made a lot of mistakes this year. Seattle played us good, but fortunately we've been making plays the last three weeks when we've had to and that wasn't the case all year."

Hasselbeck led a final charge but came up short again. Last year, his throw for Alex Bannister was picked off by Green Bay's Al Harris and returned 52 yards for an overtime TD.

This time, Seattle faced fourth-and-4 at the Rams' 5 with 27 seconds remaining. Hasselbeck stepped into the pocket, briefly considered running and then sidestepped a pass that zipped through Bobby Engram's hands in the end zone.

"The ball was coming in hot. It was a little tight in there. I think I surprised him a little bit," Hasselbeck said.

"I've got to find a way to make that play," Engram said.

Hasselbeck dropped to his knees and pounded on the turf.

He stood and slapped both hands on his helmet. Then he let out a scream of frustration, appearing ready to break into tears as he headed to the sideline.

"I wish I had it back," he said. "That's one play that could have done it for us. I'm sure there are a handful of others earlier in the game that could have done it for us. I'm not going to dwell on that too much."

The Seahawks, who won the NFC West at 9-7 despite losing twice to St. Louis, haven't won a playoff game since Dec. 22, 1984, the NFL's longest drought.

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Seahawks quarterback Matt Hasselbeck, center, reacts after throwing an incomplete pass in the end zone to Bobby Engram on fourth down in the closing seconds of the NFC wild-card playoff game while Rams players celebrate the 27-20 victory in Seattle on Saturday.

Brien's OT kick makes Schottenheimer one-and-done again

BY BERNIE WILSON
The Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — The same New York Jets who backed into the playoffs were the latest team to usher Marty Schottenheimer into the offseason.

Doug Brien kicked a 28-yard field goal with 5 seconds left in overtime to get linebacker Eric Barton off the hook for a huge penalty and give the Jets a 20-17 upset over the Chargers in a wild-card game Saturday night.

The winning drive started on the New York 30 after Chargers rookie Nate Kaeding was wide right on a 40-yard field goal try with 4:19 left in overtime. It included an 18-yard pass from Pennington to Santanu Moss that was upheld on review.

The Jets celebrated wildly while Schottenheimer walked across the field with a far-off look on his face.

"That has to be one of the most dramatic games I've been a part of," said New York's Curtis Martin, the regular-season rushing champ who was held to 66 yards on 18 carries.

And just like that, Schottenheimer still can't win in the playoffs. Named the Coach of the Year earlier in the day, he suffered his fifth straight playoff loss dating to 1993 with the Kansas City Chiefs and fell to 5-12 in his ca-



Above left, Jets holder Toby Gowin (4) congratulates kicker Doug Brien (6) after Brien kicked the winning field goal in overtime. Earlier in OT, Chargers kicker Nate Kaeding, above right, missed a field goal that would have given San Diego the victory in the AFC wild-card game.

reer, which also included a stop in Cleveland. Schottenheimer's teams have gone one-and-out eight times.

"I've been through this before; that's been well-documented," Schottenheimer said. "My disappointment, quite frankly, is with the players in that locker room and the community."

Chad Pennington, bothered by a sore throwing shoulder for five games, threw two touchdown passes for the Jets, who led 17-7 late in the third quarter and should have won in regulation.

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Mavs hit 74 percent of first-half shots in rout of Pacers Page 28